WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

1st Ed 100

To my Mother -

Just a little
expression of my great
love for you. —

Bill.

Xmas 19. -

WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL

By
Cyrus Townsend Brady

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The musical twang still vibrated in the air, when, with a roar that shook the hills, the great tawny lion, leaped into the air.

WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL

BY

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

Author of "Web of Steel," "The Baby of the Frontier," "The Little Angel of Canyon Creek," etc., etc.

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THIS STORY IS DEDICATED

TO

MY MANY FRIENDS AMONG THAT GREAT RACE

WHOSE VIRILITY AND ABILITY

HAVE NOT BEEN EXHAUSTED OR EVEN IMPAIRED

BY CENTURIES OF

DISPOSSESSION, DISPERSION, AND PERSECUTION

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FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH my vocation is that of a preacher and author I was bred to the profession of arms and I have never lost my love for things naval and military. I have long projected an essay upon the soldiers of Scripture from Joshua to the Maccabees, but instead I chose to write this novel. Let me hasten to give the reader assurance that it is only a story, that it is not a polemic.

The whole period was so intensely fascinating, so wonderfully dramatic, that the story was almost written to hand. The fictional touches necessitated were so simple, and in a certain sense so inevitable, that the novel wrote itself. Now that I have finished it I survey it with more satisfaction than I usually allow myself to indulge in over my own literary bantlings.

It likes me well. I hope it will find you in the same way. It is far enough back in history to escape the cloak and sword banality of so-called historical romance, and it revolves about an incident in which even the indifferent express a great amount of interest. It deals with the beginnings of what is perhaps, with due deference both to Anglo-Saxon and the Latin, the greatest race

of all history and shows that race under a guise with which the present is not familiar. When that Hebrew people shall have come back to their own again in other fields than those in which they are now supreme, I dare to say that the world will again sit up and take notice. It may be, indeed, that the world will come to heel! Is there not a proverb somewhere that runs "*Cherchez le juif*"? Well, I let the story go now, hoping that both Jew and Gentile will find it interesting and worth while.—C. T. B.

THE HEMLOCKS,
Yonkers, N. Y. *April*, 1917.

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I

THE STRANGERS FROM MOAB

IN the beginning God made man and woman —"male and female created He them"— thereby establishing a dramatic situation in the Garden of Eden! Be it remembered that the essence of the dramatic is found in contrast! In all the years that have passed since then every situation, sooner or later, has been resolved into these same simple, primal, contrasting elements. Sometimes it happens that at first there may be two men and a woman, or a dozen men and a woman, or *vice versa,* but ultimately the affair is narrowed down to a duet; one man, one woman, to whom the rest of the world counts for nothing. And every life story, like every romance, revolves about those two principals.

Nothing could have been less like the Garden of Eden than the ghastly ravine up which the toilers climbed. The noun is plural, the men were two. Their aim was one. They were fleeing for their lives; their safety depended upon their finding a hiding-place before the already graying dawn gave place to the brighter day. It had been late in the evening before they had dared to attempt to escape from the town, and the first dim indica-

tions of sunrise which heralded the coming morning found them still climbing the range that bounded the valley. One man was leaving a woman behind; the other, albeit unknowingly, was approaching a woman before. Consequently the thoughts of one were backward, of the other forward, thrown!

The twain were desert born and desert bred. The influence of vast silences had been often upon them. They spoke little—saving their breath, indeed, for the sharp ascent. Mountains, except as boundaries of the distant horizon, were unfamiliar to them. More experienced men would have found easier ways of ascent. These two plunged straight forward and straight upward. They had locked in their breasts secrets of their espionage which would be of immense value to the gray-haired captain and his hosts beyond the river flowing through the valley, deep and wide, which intervened between them and the safety of their camp. It was not so much personal fear that made them flee thus desperately—for this couple were as bold and as intrepid as any who dwelt in the land—but if they were taken and killed their tidings would be lost, the hosts would suffer, the Lord's cause would be delayed; so they climbed resolutely and steadily upward.

By and by, with a sudden outburst of light, the sun leaped over the mountains that shut in the valley to the east and smote upon them with all his radiance. By this instant illumination they

saw clearly the pass, if such it could be called, up which they climbed. It was bare, arid, and desolate beyond description. Perhaps when the rain descended the great naked scar on the mountain face would fill with temporary torrents, but now no drop of water was to be seen, no secluded hole in the rocks sheltered a pool from the waste of evaporation. No shrub, not the faintest indication of life of any kind, appeared. The rough, broken, white limestone rock, diversified by curious streaks of red sandstone, flung back the blinding blaze of the tropic sun with fierce intensity. Well was it that they had been schooled in cloudless, treeless desert, else they could scarce have sustained the direct and indirect radiation.

They were dripping with perspiration, their throats were parched dry, not only on account of the withering heat but because of their tremendous exertions. They were covered with dust. Presently they stopped upon a little shelf of the mountain and stood panting. They were lightly clad in tunics of soft, well-tanned leather covered with bright if roughly hammered steel rings across the breast and around the shortened sleeves which left most of their arms bare. The head of the elder was covered by a round helmet of polished iron, Babylonian in its shape. This was a stout, sturdy man approaching middle age but still handsome. He was broad-shouldered and strong and carried himself nobly, like one assured of rank and station. The other was

younger, slighter, taller. His black, short, curly hair was covered with a tall pointed steel cap of odd fashion and unusual shape. It was painted a bright blue and a silver serpent was twined around the lower end, the head of the reptile projecting forward as if in the act of striking. The whole headgear spelt Egypt. There was rich color in his smooth cheeks and a fine sparkle in his bright eyes. His bearing was free and gallant.

Loose belts, through which hung a short sword on one side and a dagger on the other, gathered each tunic into folds about the waist. Each man carried a long spear and shield. Over the left shoulder of the younger man, and across his back, hung a quiver full of arrows, and with his shield arm he carried a short but immensely stout bow. The weapon was strung and ready for action. Both men wore heavy, thick-soled sandals of rawhide, laced nearly up to the knee and well suited for hard wear. They had perforce left their heavy cloaks behind in the house of the woman who had helped them.

The day before these two travelers had approached the city of Jericho from the north. They had made a long circuit from the ford of the river, which they had crossed in the night, and following the course of the stream up the Jordan valley they had cut across the country, gained the Michmash road unobserved, and finally reached the gate in the wall late in the afternoon.

Having sustained easily enough the rather careless scrutiny of the guard at the gate, who received unhesitatingly their assurances that they were Moabites on their way to their homes from Bethel, where they had gone for trading purposes, the two strangers mingled with the evening crowds upon the narrow streets of the populous town. With their long cloaks drawn closely about them they were not dissimilar in appearance to those among whom they passed freely, neither were their apparently careless questions of the passersby, or of the idlers at the wine shops, such as to arouse any suspicions; nor did their half-concealed arms give rise to curiosity. Travelers to and from Moab through the desert and the valley always went armed. It was a necessity for the preservation of life and property.

But there was one particular equipment of one of the strangers that aroused interest. The younger of the two would wear, and this in spite of the remonstrances of the elder, that tall Egyptian helmet of unusual shape, painted bright blue, with the little serpent of silver twining about its base, its head plunged forward in the act of striking. The obstinacy of the young man had attracted attention and eventually, as such obstinacies often do, got the pair into trouble. As has been noted, the young man was good to look upon, as many women and not a few men in Jericho observed.

So soon as it was learned that the strangers had recently come from Moab, the thought which was uppermost in the mind of every dweller in the city at once found voice.

"Have ye seen the Hebrews?" asked one of the more important citizens.

"We have," answered the elder of the strangers, who constituted himself the spokesman for the two.

"Is it true what we have heard of their dealings with Moab?"

"We kept our flocks near Heshbon. They took it 'twixt dawn and morning, battering down its gates, swarming over its walls, putting men, women, and children to the sword and all else to the flames."

"Woe! Woe! Woe!" wailed an old blind man on the outskirts of the crowd who evidently enjoyed some local reputation as a seer or prophet. "So shall it be to Jericho, to its towers and bulwarks, to its walls and houses, to its men and women and children," he continued in heart-rending voice.

A shudder swept over the crowd, which was steadily growing greater in the little open square at which the strangers had arrived.

"Silence, dotard!" cried a fierce-looking soldier, halting a detachment of troops, and forcing his way roughly through the crowd. "Have we no swords in Jericho? By Baal, they shall not overrun us as they did those Moabites!"

"Who is so great a god as the God of the Hebrews?" suddenly cried out the young man wearing the Egyptian helmet painted blue.

" And what know ye about the Hebrew God?" asked the imperious soldier, looking suspiciously at the stranger as the crowd gave way before him crying:

"Way for noble Segub, the captain of the king's guard."

" What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears that declare we unto thee, O soldier!" quickly interposed the elder, laying a restraining hand upon the arm of his impetuous young companion. " Moab bloomed like a rose, now it lies wasted like a desert. They have eaten us up. Our fenced cities are broken down, our people killed, enslaved, or dispersed. Some, as we, seek safety in a strange land."

"Ye shall not seek it here in vain," said Segub haughtily, and his brave assurance seemed to put a little spirit in the terrified mob. "We shall see whether Baal and Ishtar shall bow the knee before this God of the Hebrews, whatever His name. As for our city, it is in no danger. They are on the other side of the great river, which is now in full flood. The fords at this season are almost impassable. Found ye not that true, O strangers? "

"With difficulty and at peril of our lives did we pass."

"They shall be held back by our soldiers in

force. These Hebrews shall not come over. I speak the word of Habal, the king. Go ye about your business, people of Jericho. Ye shall be safe within these walls. And who is that God that shall pluck you from the king's hand? But the day is far spent," continued Segub. "Where do ye lodge for the night?" he asked, turning again to the newcomers.

"We are strangers and seek a place of rest."

"Go ye to the house of Rahab, the harlot, priestess of Ishtar. Say to her that Segub hath sent ye. We shall have speech with ye at a more convenient season. Habal the king, whom Baal preserve, may wish to question ye about this presumptuous desert rabble of escaped Egyptian slaves."

He turned away, rejoined the detachment of soldiers which he had left at the entrance to the street, and disappeared down one of the narrow ways that led to the palace of Habal, the king.

"It grows late, sirs," said the elder of the two strangers. "Will someone direct us to the house of that Rahab of whom the brave captain spoke?"

"It lieth at the end of yonder street," answered one of the bystanders, as the crowd began to separate after the departure of Segub. "Ye cannot miss it. Look ye for a large house built upon the city wall."

The two strangers turned and, declining the proffer of further guidance, made their way rapidly toward the house indicated.

"Is it not a strange thing," whispered the younger to the elder as they passed along, "that two of God's chosen people should seek shelter in the house of a harlot and a priestess of abominations?"

"I would have thee remember earnestly that thou art a Hebrew, and we seek naught of this Rahab and her women but a safe harborage for the night," was the severe rejoinder.

"I need no such warning!" cried the younger, drawing himself up. "The position of spy is distasteful enough. I shall not willingly add to it the shame of which thou speakest."

"It is well," said the other, unmoved.

II

THE HOUSE OF THE HARLOT

IN a short time they had reached the end of the narrow street. It was closed by a house larger than the ordinary dwelling of the place and day. The house proper was raised above the street upon a platform built against the wall of the city. The upper story of the house rose above the top of the wall, and as they found out afterward projected beyond it on the outward side. A woman stood by the open door. She was tall, dark-haired, beautiful, even if no longer young. Her immodest clothing of rich material, which she wore with a sort of regal magnificence, was bright with barbaric color and her person was further adorned with necklets of gold and silver and jewels; bracelets clasped her arms and ankles, pearls were twisted about her neck. In her dark hair precious ornaments gleamed.

With great interest she surveyed the two who mounted the steps to the platform upon which she stood before the door of the house. A little real color came into her painted cheeks. She took a step in their direction. It was the elder of the two men in the very prime of life and strength

whose noble features and bearing indicated assured rank and power who spoke first.

"Is this the house of Rahab, the——" he hesitated—"the priestess of Ishtar?"

"It is the house of Rahab, the harlot and priestess of Ishtar," answered the woman, with a bitterness which did not pass unnoticed. "What seek ye, strangers?"

"Lodging for the night," was the answer.

The woman hesitated. The color deepened in her dusky cheek.

"I would not leave ye in ignorance," she began at last. "I am not minded to——" she hesitated again—"I have dismissed my women, and as for myself this office has become hateful to me. Go elsewhere for what ye seek," she said harshly. "Ye are not welcome here."

"Woman," answered the stranger mildly, "thou dost misjudge us. We are not lustful revelers. We seek only for what we ask, lodging for the night."

The woman stared at the two with deepening interest.

"By that Ishtar whom I have served," she began, "who is doubtless your goddess as mine——"

"Nay," said the younger, interrupting again with the impetuosity of youth, "we be no followers of Baal and Ishtar."

"Silence," said the other sharply, but too late, for the secret was out.

The information seemed to affect Rahab strangely. Her face brightened, the frown disappeared. The elder keenly watching her noted this with relief. He would not declare himself a follower of Baal and Ishtar, not even to save his life, but on the other hand in their present position of peril he would by no means have volunteered the information the younger had so incautiously let slip.

"If ye seek but honorable hospitality that I can give ye gladly," said the woman. "Whatever god or gods ye follow I will not betray ye. Enter."

She led the way within a long room at the end of which a low dais, or platform, ran along the wall. It was covered with cushions and heavy draperies.

"Sit ye there," she said, "and let us have further speech after I bring refreshment to ye."

"Those incautious words of thine may cost us dear," said the elder reprovingly to the younger as they disposed their weary limbs comfortably upon the dais.

"Jehovah will have us in His keeping. What makest thou of this Rahab?"

"She is a woman passing fair and noble in her bearing."

"Yes, of course, but what of her strange position?"

"Something hath touched her heart and brought her to see the evil of her ways."

"Could the knowledge of the True God by any chance have penetrated hither?"

"It is possible, but we shall soon see."

Further conversation was interrupted by the return of Rahab with slaves bearing wine, bread, and other things suitable for the refreshment of the travelers, together with lavers of water and napkins for their ablutions. All this she set before them. Dismissing the slaves and drawing a stool in front of them she questioned them while they partook gladly of her hospitality after washing their faces and hands. With unusual directness she began:

"Did I hear the young man aright when he said he worshiped another god than Baal and Ishtar?"

There was a long silence.

"I marvel not," she went on, "that ye hesitate to trust one who hath followed my trade, but it hath become hateful to me,—hateful," she continued. "I have dismissed the other women. So far as I dared I have abjured my office. When any come to me seeking—seeking—privileges of the priestess of Ishtar I am ill, ill." She clapped her hands to her heart, stood up suddenly, and paced up and down the long room raging against her fortune. "I loathe myself, yet I am helpless here. The king, the priests of Baal, Segub——"

"Is there no escape?" asked the elder stranger.

"Do ye by any chance worship a God called Jehovah?" she asked in turn.

"Blessed be His name," said both men instantly.

"I have heard of Him from one who sometimes hath stopped here for the night, as in an inn, and holding me in unwonted honor."

"Woman," began the elder, having come to a decision, "we will trust thee. We will help thee. We are Hebrews. Jehovah is our God. We are of His people."

"I thought as much. Why come ye hither?"

"To examine into this land, to see for ourselves its condition, especially to visit Jericho. God hath looked upon this people. He hath seen the cup of their iniquity full and running over. They shall die in their land. We shall possess it."

"I hate, I loathe this place and these people," said Rahab. "Life holds little for me—nay, it holds nothing. I shall welcome the sword. If it were at my throat now I would not raise a hand nor turn away. That Jehovah before whom ye bow knoweth that I speak the truth. Tell me somewhat of thy God. But indeed I have heard of Him before."

"And whence had you knowledge of Him?" asked the younger curiously.

"But lately there hath come to my house one Ephron," answered Rahab, resolved to trust these two men as they had trusted her, "a Hittite who is lord of Beth-Aram upon the top of the mountains yonder. Oh, he came in honor respecting the rags of my womanhood. Seeing my discontent he spoke to me of another God whom he and his

have worshiped since the days of thy great ancestor Abraham, who, he declareth, was the friend of his fathers."

"Even so," said the elder stranger. "Would you hear more of our God, woman?"

"My lord," answered the other, "I crave it."

She drew the stool to the feet of the man and sat down once more before him while he told her with all the fervor and power of a devotee of the mighty God of the Hebrews. To all that he said she listened with bated breath and flushed cheek and beating heart.

"Would," she said as the marvelous tale was unfolded, "that I had known this God of thine in my youth—before——"

"It is not too late now. Thou art yet young. There is time for repentance and when thou hast shown that thou hast indeed turned from thy evil ways to serve the Lord there will be positions of usefulness, even of honor and dignity, open to thee."

"And who," asked the woman, going swiftly to the root of the matter with primitive simplicity and directness, "would look with favor upon one who hath been a priestess of Ishtar and——" her voice sank to a whisper—"a harlot?"

"By the power of Jehovah all that may be blotted out," answered the man with deep earnestness. "Thou art still young and not uncomely." He paused. "I am alone in the world. I will charge myself with thy future."

"My lord, my lord," said the woman, throwing herself on her knees before him and clasping his feet with her hands. "I am not fit to touch thee," she added, bursting into a passion of tears as the elder man gently drew away from her.

" It is not that," he answered kindly, "but thou must kneel to God alone."

"Teach me more of that God," she said. "Oh, how I long to know Him!"

"In good time thou shalt know Him," answered the other, smiling pleasantly at her.

"I wait," she replied. "Now tell me how came ye to me."

"We were directed hither by a soldier, a captain whom the crowd called Segub."

"Of the king's guard!" exclaimed Rahab in terror. "Since I have feigned illness he suspecteth me."

"He said that he would seek us out for further speech again."

"Whither went he?"

"Toward the king's palace," answered the younger. "He seemed a strong soldier. I should like to meet him on the field."

"The royal Habal is no witling. He is a wise king. He will suspect more than the somewhat dull-minded soldier Segub. He will have ye before him. If he should discover—and indeed one of ye will find it hard to keep the secret"—she smiled at him as she spoke, and the young man hung his head shamefacedly—"that ye are

Hebrews he will have ye put to death, it may be with torture."

"Mistress," cried a slave, bursting into the room, "soldiers are coming up the street!"

"Who leadeth them?"

"The Captain Segub."

The two strangers started to their feet. The younger drew his sword.

"Force is impossible," cried Rahab, "and flight equally so. Wait, I have a way. Come."

She turned, mounted the stone steps rapidly, and led them to the top of the house. It was a flat terrace surrounded by a low wall and shaded by an awning. Instead of luxurious couches which such a house should have afforded, it was covered with heaped-up piles of flax. Rahab stretched out her beautiful hands to them. They marked how scarred and torn her slender fingers were.

"I have begun to earn an honest living for myself and my people with the flax," she said.

"It doeth honor to thee," said the older stranger. "But for us?"

"Lie down here," she said, pointing to the wall, "one after the other." She tore the flax away from the corner with her hands, disclosing an open conduit along the wall.

"I would rather stand and fight," protested the younger.

"It would be madness," answered Rahab.

"Thou dost belong to Jehovah," said the elder.

"I take no shame in the concealment. We are in God's hands."

He laid himself down in the conduit without hesitation, and after a moment the young man did the same. Rahab rolled the flax over them and heaped it above them. A vessel of water stood near by. She washed the paint from her cheeks, wishing that the excitement would leave them more haggard than they were. From a box she brought forth some chalk-like substance and rubbed it on her face. In the twilight she looked ghastly. Then she crossed the roof and sat down on the parapet overlooking the doorway and the street below.

III

THE SCARLET SIGN

THE soldiers stopped below in the street. Segub, attended by three young officers with drawn swords and spears, mounted to the platform and approached the door. Rahab leaned over and hailed them.

"What seekest thou, brave Segub?" she cried.

"Thou art there, Rahab!" exclaimed the captain, staring upward in the dim light.

"I am. Thine errand?"

"I will join thee on the roof and there disclose it," he answered, entering the door with his following.

He evidently knew the house, for in a few moments he presented himself before her with his attendants. Bidding them wait at the head of the stairs he crossed the roof and stopped by her side.

"What seekest thou of Rahab, the harlot?" she asked.

"What a question!" laughed Segub. "What would men seek of thee?"

"That which to-night thou canst not have," said the woman firmly. "I am ill, broken," she added desperately.

"Thy women?"

"Save a few ill-favored slaves they have abandoned me in mine illness."

"Go to, thou jade. Dost think thy white face hath attraction for me?" jeered the soldier brutally.

"Why then thy presence?"

"I sent hither two men—Moabites they claim to be. They said they had knowledge of the Hebrews. Our lord the king doubteth their story. He is of the opinion that they are Hebrew spies. He hath sent me to fetch them that he may judge them himself and deal with them accordingly. Where are they?"

"Those whom thou seekest," answered Rahab indifferently, "came hither at thy suggestion an hour hence, and finding I could give them naught but something to eat and drink, they broke their fast and went their way without the city ere the gates were closed for the night. I had but little speech with them."

"Woman," said Segub, suddenly seizing her by the shoulders and turning her face toward the light, "art thou deceiving me?"

"Take off thy hand," cried Rahab fiercely, "I am still——" She stopped, but Segub supplied the word.

"Thou art the priestess of Ishtar," he said a little more respectfully.

Although men held her person lightly as a thing to be possessed there was still a religious aspect

to her profession and to her quality which made him pause. Ishtar might protect her priestess. And the people, among whom she was personally popular from her lavish gifts, might resent any indignities to her. He gave back a little.

"Search the house," said the woman imperiously, "and when thou hast satisfied thyself that those thou seekest are not here, begone and tell the king."

"If I find them," cried Segub, "not even thy sacred office would protect thee from the wrath of Habal."

"I fear him not," said the woman boldly.

Segub meanwhile stepped to the parapet over which he leaned.

"Follow here," he called to those below. "Search the house. Let no part of it go unvisited, but take nothing on pain of death and disturb as little as possible," he added for the edification of the crowd which had collected in rear of the soldiers. Then he turned to the officers standing at the head of the stairs. "Run your spears through these piles of flax," he ordered. "Some of them might conceal a man."

He looked narrowly at Rahab as he spoke, expecting some evidence of fear or emotion if she were, as he half suspected, playing him false; but with wonderful self-control she never moved a muscle.

It so happened that the place she had chosen for the concealment of the two Hebrews was a

deep depression or conduit in the roof made to carry off water. They could, of course, hear everything that had been said. They knew that if they were discovered in hiding their lives would not be worth a moment's purchase and that they would probably be killed with hideous torture. If a spear touched them they would have to abide it without sound or motion, not only for their own safety, but for hers. In that she concealed them she had made herself a party to their errand.

The officers ran hither and thither, thrusting their spears into the piles of flax. The work was done carelessly, almost perfunctorily, for Segub was too much interested in Rahab to oversee it. Indeed, the clever woman engaged him in conversation on purpose. One spear passed between the legs of the younger Hebrew. The other grazed the side of the elder, but neither was discovered. Presently the chief soldier appeared at the head of the stairs.

"There's not a portion of the house which we have not visited, lord," he said, saluting Segub. "The strangers are not here."

"It is well," said Segub. "Thou hast escaped this time, Rahab," he added threateningly as he turned away. He stopped as he reached the stairs and looked back at her. "For the sake of other days, woman, I give thee warning that thou art under suspicion. As priestess of Ishtar thou hast of late refused thy body for the duties of thine office. Thine illness seemeth overlong.

Take the advice of a blunt soldier. Get well and that soon, and once more perform thine office toward all men."

Rahab's teeth clenched, her hands intertwined. She started after him in rage, and then stopped. She waited until the last soldier disappeared, then she turned to the pile of flax in the corner. She tore it away.

"Art safe, art unhurt?" she cried as she uncovered them.

"Jehovah hath preserved us. Save for a slight scratch on my side I am untouched."

"And I. The spear ran harmlessly between my knees," said the young man. "I would have given years of my life if I could have arisen and stricken down that insolent soldier."

"I am older than thou art, boy. Dost thou think it was a pleasure to me to lie hidden?" observed the other with unexpected heat. "I could have throttled the man that laid his hand upon thee, Rahab. Thou wert a brave woman to defy him, and for strangers. We shall not be unmindful nor shall Joshua, our great captain, nor our people, of what thou hast so bravely done for us."

"What mean ye?"

"Should we escape from this present peril, when the city is destroyed thy life shalt be spared."

"I would gladly give it in expiation."

"Ye shall live to expiate, not die," said the elder man firmly and with meaning.

"My father, mother, my sisters and brothers?"

"All," answered the stranger authoritatively. "All of thine shall be spared if like thee they shall worship Jehovah. When Jericho falls before the army of the Lord, gather them into thine house and wait."

"Will ye come soon?"

"At once."

"Ye heard the threat of Segub?"

"We heard all."

"I will die before I will again be what I was, but I cannot resist long."

"They but wait our return and report to move forward."

"The city is filled with fear of ye. The people quake at the sound of the name of the Hebrew. We have heard what ye have done to those that have opposed ye. The king, the soldiers, and Segub profess confidence in the strength of the walls, in their own swords and in their own courage, but the fear of thy God and thy people is upon them. Strike quickly."

"We shall not fail to do so."

"Meanwhile ye must get away at once."

"Most certainly, but how and where?"

"The gates of the city will be guarded, but this house overhangs the wall. The night is dark. The stars give but little light. I will let ye down from the house. Come."

Followed by the Hebrews she crossed the roof, descended the stairs to the next floor, and from a

recess in the wall she brought coils of light but strong rope stained bright scarlet. The windows looking toward the country beyond the walls were, of course, securely and heavily barred.

"Ye must break open a way," the woman began.

"I can remedy that if I have a piece of iron," said the young man.

Presently she fetched him a rude farming tool from the floor below. Using it as a lever he forced two of the bars out of their sockets.

"They must be replaced in the morning to give no sign," he said, examining the opening and finding it large enough to pass not only his own slender body but that of his more bulky companion.

"I shall see to that. Work quickly," was the answer.

He made the red rope fast to the remaining bar.

"All is ready," he said. "Woman, I, Dodai, a Prince of the Tribe of Benjamin, give thee my gratitude and my respect."

He bent low before her.

"Go first," said the elder.

Without hesitation the younger threw his leg over the sill and seized the rope. As he did so a noise came to him. He leaned far out and heard the trampling of horses, the jingle of bits, the rattle of armor, words of command.

"What will that be?" he asked as Rahab and the other joined him in the window.

"Soldiers," answered the woman. "They are seeking ye."

"Let us see which way they will come, this or the other."

Fortunately they turned away and disappeared beyond the gate. As the noises died away in the silence Rahab broke it.

"They seek ye at the fords of the Jordan. Ye cannot go that way."

"Whither, then?"

"There is concealment in the mountains. Before daybreak ye can be safely hid on the upland."

"Where dwells that Hittite of whom thou hast told us?"

"Yonder," said the woman, pointing beyond the great headland known as Quarantania. "He will give ye shelter. I should lie close there and wait until they give over the pursuit."

"It is well. We shall do so. Descend," commanded the elder.

The head of the younger disappeared in the night beneath the sill as he lowered himself hand over hand down the rope. The elder Hebrew turned to the woman.

"Thy services shall not be forgotten. The day that the Host of the Lord encamps before Jericho twine this red cord of thine in the bars of this window. It shall be a sign and a protection for thee. Keep close at home when the city is taken. Put a red cord also before thy door, and none shall harm thee."

"My lord," said the woman humbly, "thine handmaid heareth."

"And it shall be that I shall not forget thee," said the Hebrew gravely. He laid his hand on the woman's bowed head. "There is happiness in store for thee and honor. I, Salmon, a Prince of the Tribe of Judah, shall see to it if thou wilt intrust thyself to me."

"My lord," said the woman again, "thy bondwoman heareth." She caught his hand from her head and pressed it to her heart. "If thou dost not disdain the prayer of a harlot that was but is no longer, may thy God have thee, Salmon, and the youth Dodai in His keeping."

IV

THE ARROWS OF DODAI

"I THINK," said the elder man as the two came to a pause shortly after sunrise, "that we are safe now."

He stepped to the edge of the shelf, from which he had a far view of the earth beneath and stared down into the valley. In contrast to the arid and desolate gorge in the mountains up which they had come the valley was clothed with verdure. The city from which they had escaped crowned the top of a little hillock midway between the mountains and the river. All about it were thick groves of palms, pomegranates, and other forestry of the tropic land. The bright, rapidly flowing river, which shone like silver in the morning light, ran through fringes of acacias. Far off to the southward, gleaming like a polished shield, embosomed in dark, rugged treeless cliffs, the placid waters of a great lake extended indefinitely, hiding their bitterness in peaceful stillness.

The whole gorgeous, luxuriant panorama was spread out before them. With the white walls of its houses the city embowered in trees looked like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald. Cattle stood here and there in the lush meadows;

sheep were pastured upon every hill. Bands of men could be seen on the farther side of the city making toward the river. Fully armed, flashes of light proclaimed the reflection of the sun upon their helms or shields or spear points.

"We are surely safe now," repeated the elder man, relief and satisfaction in his voice; "there hath been no pursuit. And if there were we could hold this rift in the mountains against any enemy. The soldiers yonder are those we heard." He pointed across the valley with his sinewy, brown, naked, muscular arm. "They are seeking us at the fords."

"There is no escape that way," said the younger.

"We shall wait until the night fall and then try," resumed his companion. "Oh, for a drop of water and a place to couch ourselves for rest!"

"But how shall we cross even when night doth come?"

"Perhaps they will have wearied of their watch and will withdraw from the fords. Thou canst not swim?"

"And where should I have learnt that art in the desert where I was born?"

"True, and I am not in much better case," answered the elder, "for I have not essayed it since I was a boy by the Red Sea, but we shall manage somehow. For the present there is still the range to be surmounted. Once on the crest we may find water and shelter and food."

"Perhaps the lord of Beth-Aram of whom the woman spoke."

"It may be we shall be guided to the house of that believing Hittite."

"On the other hand, we are like to fall into the hands of an enemy."

"It is more than likely, but we must chance it. Jehovah hath us in His keeping."

"Thou dost comfort me with that thought."

"Then come."

"It must be so, let us go on."

"Yes, but before thou goest look once more at the house on the wall of the town, whence we escaped last night."

"I see it yonder."

"Forget it not. That woman impressed me strangely. She seemeth repentant of her evil trade and anxious to believe in our God," said the elder man.

"Jehovah give her peace," said the younger man gravely.

"Amen. She was a woman well-favored, and our promise must be kept."

"That indeed," assented the youth. "Joshua and the elders will confirm it. But let us go."

Refreshed somewhat by their brief pause, the two turned to the hill, here more precipitous than in any other portion of their ascent. Their natural sturdiness, activity, and strength served them well here. They made their way upward over paths which had they stopped to consider

would have been impassable, and so at last they reached the crest.

They found themselves suddenly transported, as if by magic, into the realm of the unexpected, for here was grass, green and fresh, a little cup-shaped valley, hidden until they came upon it suddenly. It was surrounded by lowering cliffs. Sheep browsed on the hillside. Within a stone-walled inclosure cattle were pastured. At the opposite end of the oasis a group of olive trees spread their rich green leaves in the bright sunlight. The air which had come to them with deadly heat as they climbed, touched them now with a sudden and grateful coolness. Down through the center of the valley a little stream ran to lose itself in the grassy slopes of the brink after it had filled a deep, well-paved pool. Far back within the trees could be discerned the white walls of a spacious habitation, apparently builded out of the native limestone of the hills.

Climbing over the brink of the chasm and surmounting the low wall which formed the outmost barrier of this pleasant valley, the newcomers stood petrified with surprise and astonishment. A low exclamation of delight burst from the lips of the younger, who was less controlled than the elder. They stood and gazed a few moments, their eyes sweeping the landscape. Suddenly, the younger touched the elder on the shoulder and pointed off to the right. The grassy sward terminated in thick bushes out of which trees

grew and above which the crags sprang skyward. Upon a rock, just at the edge of the coppice, beneath the shadow of the dark green leaves of a far-spread and ancient terebinth a woman sat. Her back was turned toward them. Her elbow rested upon her knee, her head in her hand. She was day-dreaming even thus early in the morning. Day-dreaming, quite unconscious of the presence in the valley of certain and possible enemies. No bark of dog or bleat of sheep had heralded the approach of the strangers. They had come noiselessly. Equally without proclamation, a great tawny beast driven by hunger from his mountain lair, was slinking through the undergrowth back of the woman, getting into position for a spring which would land him upon his prey. He went noiselessly, scarcely shaking a leaf in his progress.

The two men, keen-eyed, watchful, observant of everything, saw the faint slow movement through the undergrowth, marked the outline of the moving animal and divined instantly what it was. To act at once was as natural as to breathe. The young man tore from the quiver a heavy war arrow, meant for mastery, designed to pierce through the mail or armor of the day. Quick as a thought he fitted it to the bow, lifted it, and with all his force drew back the string until the head of the arrow rested upon his clenched hand.

"Now may Jehovah guide thine arm," whispered the elder, who had raised his spear and

loosened his sword in its sheath, "thou hast not a moment——"

But as he spoke the younger released the string in the nick of time. The musical twang still vibrated in the air, when, with a roar that shook the hills, the great tawny lion, every nerve already set for the spring, leaped into the air, and fell crashing down, biting fiercely at the deadly arrow buried to the feathers around which the blood spurted from his side.

The woman sprang to her feet with a scream and stared backward. As she did so her eyes fell on the writhing figure of the huge beast, rolling in agony, roaring in pain and rage at this deadly weapon piercing his vitals. Utterly uncomprehending and yet paralyzed with the sense of her danger, she stood rooted to the spot. It was evidence of her nerve and courage, her self-control, that she did not faint, though it seemed her heart stood still. Presently she heard a voice that seemed to come from afar, so low was it to her consciousness, although in reality the words were shouted with the full power of a strong man's lungs.

"Bide thou still, woman," was the message. "I will save thee."

She heard a whir through the air, was dimly conscious of something like a flash of light and another arrow buried itself in the prostrate animal. The second arrow acted as a strange stimulus. The lion got to his feet, and stood

wavering, yet determined. The next instant a figure interposed between the woman and the beast, a sword flashed. Deftly avoiding a blow from the mighty paw as the lion desperately rose to strike, the sword darted into the throat of the great beast and came back wet with blood. It was the *coup de grâce,* indeed, for all that had been ferocity and power and life a few seconds before rolled over dead.

"Well shot and well struck," said the elder man, coming toward the other. "Thy brethren will be proud of thee when I have told this tale. This young man's arm, woman, hath saved thy life."

"Thou shalt not find me ungrateful," answered the woman, slowly battling for self-control successfully at last, and speaking the same language as the newcomers; with a difference of accent, however.

"Good," said the elder man. "We have toiled all night and are weary. Give us, we pray thee, food and drink and bestow us somewhere that we may rest."

"Gladly," said the woman, "but first,"—she turned to the younger, who had stood staring at her,—"tell me, I pray, your names."

"I am Dodai," directly replied the younger man, "son of Ahoah, of the Tribe of Benjamin of the children of Abraham."

"Thou art a Hebrew?"

"I am."

"And thy companion?"

"I am Salmon, son of Nahshon, of the Tribe of Judah," said the elder, answering for himself.

"What do ye here?"

"Question for question, maiden," said the elder man shrewdly. "Who art thou? Nay, we ask not from idle curiosity, but perhaps the slight service rendered thee shall make thee kind to our request."

"I am called Arinna, only daughter of Ephron, of the Tribe of Zohar."

"It was from one Ephron the Hittite——" began Salmon, his eyes shining with pleasure.

"And I am of that race."

"That our father Abraham bought a field that contained the Cave of Machpelah, where he lieth buried with his wife under the old oaks of Mamre over against Hebron," said Salmon.

"Although none of thy race have been near the place for three hundred years, it still remaineth in thy possession. Thou wilt find the grave inviolate when thou comest there," the woman returned. "As that great Abraham was thine ancestor, so that Ephron his friend was mine."

"Thou art not of Jericho, then?"

"Nay, I am of this place."

"And how is this place called?"

"Beth-Aram."

"The house of the hills," said the elder man, translating the word. "It is well named," he

added, looking about him. "We are fortunate. This is the place of which the woman spoke," he added to his youthful companion, who had eyes and ears for nothing but the lovely girl to whom he had just rendered such great service.

"My father keeps his flocks yonder, and tills the fields hereabouts. There is a spring here that hath been in possession of my family for hundreds of years."

"But in the winter?" asked the younger man.

"My mother," said the woman, "was a Hittite of the town of Gibeon, by the pool upon the upland. We dwell there then."

"Let there be friendship between me and thee, maiden," said Dodai suddenly, extending his hand.

He had been devouring her with his glance as she stood before him while Salmon's tongue had run on.

"My life is thine, lord," said the young woman, fearlessly meeting his hand with her own, "but thou art weary and tired with thy long hard journey."

"Hungry and thirsty, too," interposed Salmon, determining that the main point should not be lost sight of.

"Come with me to the house. I would present thee to my father, who will thank thee for this." She looked back at the great lion. "Slaves will prepare his skin for thee as a trophy of thy prowess. Come."

She turned and led the way across the sward toward the white walls of the house. The two men followed, one as if in a dream. Arinna, the daughter of Ephron the Hittite, of the Tribe of Zohar, was passing fair. Salmon had looked on women of other peoples than those from which he sprang, and his mind was now filled with Rahab's gorgeous picture, but the life of Dodai had been passed altogether with the tribes of Israel. He had never seen a woman like this. Through long years of intermarriage with other people, the original Mongol features of the Hittites had been ameliorated. The young girl, for in years it was obvious that she had scarcely yet reached woman's estate, was as blond as an Amorite, her eyes were blue, her complexion fair, her hair a rich light brown. The skin of her neck and arms, save where browned by the sun, was as white as milk when the movement of her loose dress in the gentle wind revealed it.

She wore a short-sleeved tunic of blue that fell to her knees and was girdled beneath her breasts by a cincture of byssus, woven of fibers stolen from the sea and dyed yellow. Over the tunic was a short, sleeveless Tyrian vest embroidered with gold. A cloak of wool, striped blue and white, was thrown across her shoulders and kept from falling to the ground by a silver chain and in place of a veil a cap of silver net covered her head. On her little feet were sandals laced halfway to the knees. She was a woman of medium

stature and as slightly and gracefully built and formed as a young fawn. Dodai was quite contented to follow at her heels, although he envied the cloak that she drew about her as she ran and which half hid, half revealed the graces of her charming figure.

In no short time they drew near the walled inclosure surrounding the house. Slaves appeared and, being bidden by their mistress, summoned others, who straightway betook themselves to the coppice where the body of the lion lay. Passing through a gate in the wall, the maiden led the way to the house and entered through a doorway in the wall.

She beckoned to the strangers to follow. When their eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the room in which they found themselves, they saw a man of noble aspect, seated cross-legged upon a dais with a little table before him upon which lay certain parchments he was apparently discussing with the upper servants who were giving account of their charge.

"My father," began the maiden, and Dodai, at least, thought he had never heard the words so sweetly pronounced, "here are strangers craving thy hospitality."

"Come they in peace or war, they cannot ask hospitality of Ephron in vain. Sirs, ye are welcome."

"They have a double claim to thy consideration, my father," continued Arinna.

"And what is that, my child?"

"As I sat musing under the great terebinth near the top of the hill, a lion crept upon me unawares and but for the quick action of this bowman I had not lived to tell thee this tale."

"My son," said Ephron, turning to the young man and speaking with all the courtesy of his day and race, "more than life itself to me is this daughter of mine old age. All that I have is thine and thy companion's. Ask what thou wilt."

"We seek nothing but food, drink, and a place to sleep, noble Ephron," interposed Salmon.

"And that thou shalt have at thy pleasure," answered the other. He clapped his hands and slaves came running from some inner apartment. "Set forth food and drink, the best that we have in the house, for these noble strangers," he said.

As the slaves ran to obey this behest, Ephron rose and approached the newcomers.

"Ye speak our language," he began, "but with a difference. Whence come ye and what is your errand? But stay," he added, as Salmon opened his lips to answer, "tell me nothing unless it be thy pleasure. As guests and as preservers of my daughter, the house is thine and we are thine without question."

"We are Hebrews," answered Salmon, giving his name and family, "and this is Dodai, a Prince of the Tribe of Benjamin. We were in Jericho yesterday and through the connivance of Rahab, the harlot, we were let down from the main wall

last night and made our escape to these mountains.

"I know that Rahab," interrupted Ephron as Salmon purposely paused in his account. "She is a most unhappy woman."

"So we observed. She told us of thee, and promised us a welcome if we chanced upon Beth-Aram."

"She spoke truly. Ye have it. But what, if I may ask, sought ye in Jericho and in the house of Rahab the harlot and the priestess of Ishtar?"

"We were sent by our great Captain Joshua, the leader of the Lord's host, to spy on the land and especially that city, Jericho," answered Salmon, now resolved that it was safe to confide in this grave and noble Hittite.

"An evil city and full of wickedness and idolatry and blood," answered Ephron.

"It is devoted to destruction," said Dodai fiercely. "In its abominations shall it perish."

"Having escaped from it with our lives we await our chances to recross the fords of the Jordan and carry our report to Joshua and the great council of the tribes," continued Salmon.

"As Hebrews ye are, of course, worshipers of Jehovah?" said Ephron.

"We are, blessed be His name," answered both the newcomers in unison.

"I, too, worship the great God of the Hebrews."

"And where didst thou learn of Him?" asked Salmon.

"From that Ephron who was the friend of Abraham, who was the friend of God."

"Let there be peace between the house of Ephron and the house of Israel," said Salmon, extending his hand.

"Amen to that," answered Ephron, not observing that actuated by a common impulse Arinna, his daughter, and Dodai, the son of Ahoah, had also ratified the agreement in the same way.

V

THE QUICK-PASSIONED LOVERS

IT would have been much more to the taste of Dodai to have spent the day, so auspiciously begun, in delightful conversation with the maiden who had at once made so deep an impression upon his virgin heart; but, as Salmon pointed out, their need of sleep and rest was imperative. It was highly important that what they had learned should be imparted to Joshua and the elders as soon as possible. The next night, or the day after at the latest, must find them on their way; and as they would have to cross the Jordan River in full flood, the banks of which were now apparently well patrolled, and at the same time run the gantlet of the Canaanitish guard at whatever ford they elected to try, they would need to be in the best possible trim for the perilous undertaking, so he overbore his young companion's objections and carried him off to the cool and quiet inner chambers of the house which were tendered them by the generous Hittite.

Dodai had vainly insisted that it would be no use, that he was not sleepy, and that he was not tired. He had expected, even when his objec-

tions had been overborne, to spend the hours in thinking of Arinna; but he had underestimated his fatigue, and after all it was old Salmon who awoke first and aroused the youthful Benjamite.

"It is late in the afternoon," began Salmon, drawing the curtain from the window and showing the low-declining sun. "Thou hast slept the day through. Art rested?"

"I feel strong enough for any demand, refreshed and ready," answered Dodai, rather shamefacedly it must be admitted as he caught the twinkle in Salmon's eyes.

The elder Hebrew had not been unmindful of the sudden admiration in which the younger held the daughter of the house. Being in love himself he was glad to recognize the symptoms in others.

"That being the case we will start for the camp after sunset."

"Would it not be well to wait another day?" Dodai questioned rather appealingly.

"Why? Art unequal to the journey?"

Now this was in the nature of a poser since Dodai had already committed himself on that point. He stared at Salmon, his color deepening, unable to think of a satisfactory reply.

"I have marked thee," continued the elder, lifting a warning hand. "Let not thine heart go out to a strange woman of Canaan. Thou knowest well how these mixed marriages are regarded by the elders of Israel."

"Saving the respect due to thine age and rank, my worthy counselor," Dodai returned quickly, "the warning might with propriety be made to thee as well."

For a moment Salmon frowned and then, the hit being so palpable, he laughed.

"We be passengers in the same ship, thou and I, son of Ahoah. Although Rahab hath rendered the cause great service, while this maiden——"

"Is already a worshiper of Jehovah."

"Is it so?"

"Her father, Ephron——"

"Aye! But I have known women to follow the religion of their mothers, and she who bore this one was a Canaanite."

"I will even ask her," was the prompt reply of Dodai.

"Thou wilt do well not to engage thyself with her and——"

"But what of Rahab and thee?"

"Enough," answered Salmon, this time obviously annoyed, "the cases differ."

The sound of their voices had penetrated to the outer chamber which Ephron and Arinna had just entered.

"Ye are awake, I perceive," said the Hittite, at that moment drawing the curtain before the outer door and standing in the entrance. "I hesitated to disturb ye, knowing your need of rest, but it is late. The evening meal is spread, and we wait your presence."

Now, that meal was simple, but because Ephron was a great chief it was served with some ceremony and it seemed to Dodai, who as junior took but a modest part in the weighty conversation carried on between Salmon and their host, that it would be protracted forever. It was over at last, however, and the four people went out upon the terrace shaded by trees where Salmon, commiserating the impatience of the youth, engaged Ephron in further conversation upon the military resources and the possibilities of any formidable resistance of the Canaanites.

Dodai and Arinna, thus left to themselves, were quick to take advantage of the opening; the maiden, quick-passioned as the youth with the fire of the Orient, was as much impressed by him as he by her. By a common impulse they left the courtyard and walked to and fro side by side upon the grass hard by the house under the trees. The low sun was just setting. It was now deliciously cool upon the upland. The wind, fragrant with the perfume of blossoms, for it was the springtime of the year, blew gently across them. With soldier-like directness the love-smitten Dodai, eagerly embracing the first moment he enjoyed alone with the young woman, broached the subject of her religion.

"Thy father, the noble Ephron, is a worshiper of Jehovah, our God."

He laid a deep emphasis on the pronoun quite in consonance with prevailing ideas of the

Hebrews of that day and long after. There might be other gods, that was scarcely to be doubted, but Jehovah was their God and He was the greatest of all gods.

"It is even so."

"And thou?"

He put the question with an eagerness that at once betrayed the trend of his thoughts to the maiden. It was with some hesitation that she answered falteringly, because she realized that so much depended upon her reply. She could not be indifferent to this handsome and already passionately devoted young man.

"I do not know. My mother was a Hivite of Gibeon. She worshiped Baal and Ishtar. She died, my father said, in giving birth to me. If she had lived he might have brought her to his way of thinking."

"And thou, hath he not taught thee?"

"Because he loved her he hath left me largely free. Sometimes I think I believe in that Jehovah of his and thine. But sometimes I worship Baal and Ishtar."

"It cannot be," said Dodai passionately, using the Hebrew name for the Babylonian idol, "that one so sweet, so pure, so lovely, hath given herself to the vile and unspeakable abominations of Ashtoreth?"

"As to that," answered Arinna, looking her questioner full in the face with the courage of innocence and thrilling to the praise that preceded

his appeal, "I know nothing. Here have I lived alone save in the brief months of winter at Gibeon and there my father hath kept me away from the temple and its priestesses."

"Now, may Jehovah be praised for that," said the young man. "I marvel that thou hast not learned of the greatness of our God. Who is like Him among the gods?"

"I am willing to learn of thee," said Arinna softly.

"I shall teach thee," answered Dodai exultantly, "and I know thou wilt believe in Him gladly when thou dost know."

"I owe thee much," said the girl, "my life——"

"It is not because of that that I would teach thee, that I would have thee a follower of Jehovah."

"Why, then?"

"Joshua, my father and mother, the elders of our tribes, would never permit me or any one of Jehovah's chosen people to marry with a worshiper of a false god."

"I have been sought in marriage," answered Arinna proudly, while the color flamed in her face as she drew the unavoidable inference from his declaration, "by men who cared little of what religion I was. There is a prince of Jerusalem in particular, high in the favor of the king Adoni-Zedec, who hath of late been a persistent suitor for my hand. I cared not for his religion nor he for mine."

"Dost thou love this presumptuous heathen?" questioned Dodai fiercely.

"I have scarcely seen him," laughed the maiden evasively. "He hath wooed me through my father."

"I shall do that presently. Meanwhile I make suit to thine own heart."

"But thou wouldst have me of thy religion, while these others——"

"They cared but for thy body, and indeed it is passing fair."

"While thou?"

"I care for thy soul as well. See, Arinna, daughter of Ephron, I love thee. When thou stoodst affrighted over the body of the lion it came to me that no maiden in all the tribes of Israel, and they are many and some of them are beautiful, could compare with thee."

"And is it because thou hast found me so fair——"

"Nay," went on the infatuated young man. "If thou hadst been less fair, since I have spoken with thee, since I have heard thee talking to thy father, I would have loved thee. I could not help it."

"I shall be glad to know more of that Jehovah of thine."

"Doth that mean——" exclaimed Dodai, whereat Arinna hung her head.

"My life is thine," she whispered, flashing a passionate glance at him that set his quick pulses

bounding faster at what he saw ere she withdrew her eyes again.

"But I must have more."

"What more?"

"Thine heart."

There was a little pause. The maiden suddenly looked up at him. She put out her hand.

"Thou hast it," she whispered.

But Dodai disdained that little hand. Where they stood in the dusk 'neath the trees they were hidden from all. Dodai shot a quick glance backward at the terrace. Ephron's back was toward him. He and Salmon were in earnest discussion. He swept the maiden to his heart.

"My lord," she whispered as he kissed her.

The deep voice of Salmon calling him presently brought him to his senses.

"I come," he answered, and then to the maiden: "Thou wilt wait for me?" he asked quickly.

"Here in Beth-Aram."

"I shall come to claim thee."

"Speed the day," said the girl.

"Let thy father teach thee of Jehovah."

"Nay, I am fain to learn of Him from thy lips alone," answered Arinna.

"Be it so."

"I am pledged to thee. Thy God my God, thy people my people," repeated the girl, using one of the formulas of the betrothal bond.

Dodai, seeing none was looking, kissed her again.

"Shall I speak to Ephron?" he asked as they walked across the grass.

"Say naught to him until thou hast performed thy task and come to claim me."

"It is well. Before we part tell me the name of that prince of Jerusalem."

"His name is Arami. Why dost thou ask?"

"That I may kill him in the field."

"Why, what hath he done to thee?"

"He is a Canaanite, but if that were not enough he hath presumed to sue for what is from this hour mine."

Salmon was of the opinion that they would better start on their return journey at once, that they should take advantage of the twilight to descend the mountain with which they were somewhat familiar and he hoped under cover of the darkness to get safely across the river. Dodai, having settled matters so far to his own satisfaction, was quite willing. Indeed, as he was under the command of the elder man his willingness or unwillingness was not of especial moment.

They bade adieu to their kind host and his lovely daughter and after some difficulties and dangers reached the camp of the Hebrews early on the following morning. Their report decided Joshua to move at once. Scouts had discovered far to the northward of Jericho a place where the Jordan, then at full flood, ran between high banks of loose earth which nearly approached each other. It was easy to start a landslide at that

point and a detachment of Hebrews working energetically and unobserved by the Canaanites at the place where the river narrowed which was uninhabited and unguarded, no one dreaming of such an undertaking, they tumbled a vast mass of earth into the river, effectively damming it up temporarily.

As the flood died away the Israelites crossed the river, the Ark of the Covenant being borne in the midst of them. The Canaanitish soldiers, amazed and terrified at the sudden subsidence of the raging torrent which none could explain, withdrew in panic and let their enemies pass over unopposed. It seemed to the Hebrews and the Canaanites alike that their God had mysteriously made that passage possible. This was indeed the truth, albeit He had worked in this instance, as He generally did and does, through human brains and human hands. The investment of Jericho followed shortly thereafter.

VI

THE FALL OF JERICHO

AT first fearfully, then curiously and finally derisively, the people of Jericho had watched the strange and unaccountable actions of the Hebrews. At the beginning of the week, after they had been decisively beaten by the invaders in several heavy skirmishes during which they had endeavored to rush the Hebrew camp at Gilgal, they had withdrawn their forces into the city and trusting to the strength of the walls of the town and its well-equipped garrison of mercenary soldiers, had bidden defiance to those desert nomads who evidently possessed no machinery whatever for the taking of places so strongly fortified as Jericho.

They had beheld, not unmoved indeed but with no effort to prevent it, the seizure of the famous springs and fountains, the lovely gardens and the luxuriant groves of palm in which the city was set. The country houses outside the walls in this verdant oasis had been gutted and everything of value had been burned up by these strange people who spared only the trees nearest the open fields where their camp was pitched. It was as if they had determined that nothing should

be left of Jericho, its people and their property. Their aim was not conquest but destruction, not to say annihilation.

On the first day of the investment of the city the Hebrews had undertaken an extraordinary maneuver. Its unusualness had filled the minds of the king, his soldiers and people, and the refugees who were crowded within the walls, with a certain awe, not to say fear. It was inexplicable. In its apparently foolish inutility they naturally suspected some deep and fearful purpose.

Leaving the vast throng of their old men, women, and children in the adjacent camp, the Hebrew army had been drawn up in long lines. At a given signal these lines had formed into a column and had started a seemingly purposeless march around the city, out of bowshot, indeed beyond any missile range.

The advance guard of the Hebrew host and the main body came first, tribe after tribe, family after family, in close ranks under their several rude primitive standards, and all full-armed. Following these marched seven men without arms clad in priestly vestments. Each one bore a crooked trumpet made of a ram's horn. Following the priests four other unarmed men, evidently also of priestly rank by their dress, by means of poles thrust through golden rings on the corners carried a small oblong box about four feet long by two feet in its other dimensions.

This casket was made of smooth, well-joined

shittim or acacia wood, overlaid with gold plates, with a rim or molding around the upper edge. The top of the box was covered by a broad golden plate, called the mercy seat, polished to a mirror-like luster. At each end of this plate were two golden angels, or cherubim, facing inward. The bright sunlight was reflected from the gold plate of this mysterious coffer in vivid flashes as its position was constantly shifted by the men moving over the uneven ground. This brilliant object, which the people of Jericho rightly connected with the awful God of the Hebrews, was the object of their most breathless interest and aroused the greatest terror. They had never seen anything like it. They expected from it some mighty outburst of consuming force.

The cavalcade was brought up by the rear guard, the Tribe of Dan. The army was headed by Joshua, whose venerable and imposing person was instantly marked. Following him marched a little group of the principal fighting men, chiefs of the twelve tribes, all completely armed, mostly with the spoils of Egypt and of the various campaigns in the land of Moab. This huge assemblage of soldiers marched slowly and deliberately around the beleaguered city.

From time to time the priests sounded their trumpets in groups of seven blasts. Aside from that the Hebrew host proceeded in perfect silence. Not a word, not a whisper was breathed from the ranks. No commands of any sort were given by

the officers. With his uplifted spear Joshua had signaled for the advance, and he himself in full armor, his long white beard flowing over his breast, led them on their way. The harsh, raucous, unpleasing blasts of the ram's horn trumpets echoed across the open space between the palm groves and the city walls, without other accompaniment of sound save the trampling of many feet and the clatter of arms and armor.

At first the braying of the trumpets as well as the deliberate and solemn approach of the Hebrews had been greeted with yells and shouts from the walls, breathing mockery and defiance, but as the march proceeded steadily and as the sound of the trumpets reverberated over the walls and through the town again and again, the clamor of the people died away and they stared in awed silence.

As a matter of fact, aside from the unusualness of the inscrutable maneuver, the sight of the armed force of the Hebrews was enough to give any enemy pause, and when to the healthy fear inspired by the numbers and quality of the army were added the natural anxiety and apprehension which the story of their ruthless ravaging of Moab had brought about, there was abundant cause for alarm. Jericho was a large and very important city, but cities were crowded together then in spaces unbelievably small to the expansive ideas and practices of the present, and the fighting men of the twelve tribes, although in many

ranks, were sufficient completely to encompass the town.

As the slow march proceeded trumpets were sounded within the city and all the soldiery, together with the armed inhabitants, were brought to the walls and arrayed to repel the assault which it was confidently expected would follow this strange parade. It is hard to say whether surprise or relief predominated in the hearts of the people when, after the long circuit of the city had been once made, the columns broke up and after placing strong detachments to cover all ways of going in or out of the town so that it was completely invested, the main body, with the mysterious box which the people of Jericho were more convinced than ever had something to do with the great God of the Hebrews, went back to the great camp on the outskirts of the palm groves.

The Hebrews themselves were almost as much mystified as the Canaanites. They could not know the reason for the march about the walls. Indeed, only the elders of the tribes, the priests, and the chiefs of the Levites were aware that after the defeat of the sallies of the Jericho garrison Joshua had gone out alone to the top of the little hillock whence he could get a fair view of the city unobscured by the palm trees and make his plans. And there in the dusk of evening One had met him in robes of light with sword of flame with a mysterious message that while hereafter they

would have to depend upon their own wit and courage, the capture of Jericho would be the Lord's business and the Captain of the Lord's host would take command.

It was in obedience to His directions that Joshua had executed this strange maneuver and it was in obedience to these extraordinary directions that upon the next day and for a total of six days the same parade was carried out in the same way. The surprise and awe of the besieged were less on the second day and still less on the third. On the fourth day they smiled. On the fifth day they laughed. On the sixth day they jeered openly, and in the beginning of the seventh day they mocked greatly. It was a huge jest, this purposeless military promenade. But their merriment ceased abruptly later in that seventh day. They stopped mocking and jeering at the end of the first round, because the usual withdrawal to the camp did not take place.

On the contrary the silent Hebrews continued their march, beginning without a halt a second round. The Canaanites had become so used to the procedure that they could scarcely believe their eyes. Any change was significant, and when they noted the march of circumvallation begin the third time and then the fourth and then the fifth amazement gave place to an alarm, deeper if possible than the emotion which had greeted the maneuver on the first day.

Again brass trumpets sounded throughout the

city. The soldiers, who throughout the week had grown careless and indifferent, were again summoned to their places on the walls. The priests began once more their savage propitiatory rites in the temples of their horrible gods, offering upon their hideous altars the ultimate sacrifice of human lives! Consultations earnest and serious took place between Habal, the king, Segub, the captain, and the principal officers. This conference came to nothing. There was indeed nothing to do except to make a sally, which in view of the numbers and quality of the Hebrews was not to be thought of. They could only wait and so they waited with growing fear in their hearts, their very helplessness adding to their paralyzing terror.

It was not only the soldiers, the nobles, and the principal men of the city who watched the enemy from the walls, but from a certain house which, like many others projected over the walls, a woman had stared for seven days at the encompassing foe. Eyes were keener, vision sharper, in those days. The range of missile weapons was shorter. Armies got nearer to one another with impunity. The distance of the marching Hebrews from the walls was not great. Rahab thought she detected among the chiefs of the men ranged under the tribal banner of the Lion of Judah that Salmon who had promised her his protection and whose princely generosity and magnanimity had so won her heart.

The brilliant curtains with which the Canaanites shaded their windows had been replaced by hangings of somber hue at the principal outer openings of Rahab's house and around the mullion of the largest window a bright scarlet-colored rope had been securely twisted. In that red cord lay her salvation. Anxiety, determination, shame, repentance for her past life, as well as love and hope for the future, had torn Rahab's bosom with a diversity of emotions. The few who came to her whom she drove away protesting she was ill almost to death found confirmation of her story in her appearance.

She had promised herself that she would die rather than submit to the indignities about which men of that day thought little and which indeed had been a part of her debased religion, yet she did not wish to die. The noble and splendid Hebrew had awakened emotions in her heart which she had thought had vanished with her extreme youth and which she could never entertain again. So she craved life.

She had assembled her family, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and their children in her own house and had endeavored to tell them of that Jehovah of whom she had learned and in whom she now earnestly believed with all her soul. Such were the confusion and anxieties produced by the siege that none had marked her actions. She kept her people close, avoiding the necessity of explanations to the curious by re-

straining them from going into the streets. There was also a red cord fastened to the doorpost and draped across the lintel of the house on the dais above the street, as an added precaution, should the Hebrews, as she at least never doubted, affect an entrance to the city and approach her house from that direction.

The siege was too short, Jericho had been too well provisioned for anyone to have felt the privations of hunger or thirst. So those within the walls were comfortable enough and familiarity with danger without any overt results had restored their spirits until this day. The slow and silent march of the Hebrews continued. Those who kept count noticed that as the day declined toward the late afternoon the seventh circuit of the walls was beginning. To the Canaanites, as to the Hebrews, seven was always a mystic number. Those who counted told those who had not that this last was the beginning of the ominous seventh march.

The thought sprang up in first one and then another until finally it pervaded the soldiers on the wall, the inhabitants of the city, even the women and children. It was recalled that this was the seventh day of the marching. Surely if anything were to happen it would happen now. The boldest looked to their weapons. The less hardy strove to conceal the beating of their hearts and to give no outward evidence of their terror. The weakest spirited among them gave way to

transports of fear. Panic was in the air, yet not a thing had happened.

Above the harsh roar of the ram's horn trumpets without, shouts and cries, wails and sobs, arose within. The commands to the soldiers ceased. There was nothing further to be said. They were all in their places. There was no need to enjoin silence among them. They listened to the sobbing of the women behind them, the outcries of the priests and devotees coming faintly from the temples, with the shrieks of the human sacrifices over the blood-stained altars, their eyes fixed on the silent ranks of the Hebrews. If those marching warriors would only speak, would only cry out, would only give some sound! There was something terribly ominous in the grim, still way with which they marched. Habal, standing by Segub watching, turned to the latter.

"The old man," he said, pointing to the head of the line coming again into his view around the wall to the southward.

"Joshua, they call him, lord," answered Segub.

"The seventh circuit is about completed," observed the king, handling his sword in nervous indecision.

Segub lifted his bow and then lowered it.

"They are too far off," he said ill-humoredly.

"What is to be will be," observed Habal apprehensively. "Now may Baal and Ishtar aid——"

He never finished the prayer, for with a sudden shiver of the earth the massive wall on which he

stood vibrated as if it had been smitten by a mighty hand. The moving lines of the Hebrews stopped. The host found its voice at last. A great outburst from a multitude of iron throats, that was the more terrible because of the previous silence, swept across the plain. So great was the volume of sound that it drowned the answering yell of the soldiers of Jericho, which was partly shriek, partly prayer, partly defiance, for they all had felt that strange trembling of the wall.

The movement increased. The earth seemed to have gone mad. The huge foundations upon which they had built their hopes were quivering beneath them. The erstwhile solid earth waved like a sea. A parapet gave way. A soldier leaning upon it screamed, shot into the air, fell sickeningly, and lay silent and still.

The encircling line of Hebrews was suddenly alive with steel. The low sunlight was reflected from bared swords, lance points shaken in the air; louder than ever came the blasts of the trumpets and the threatening outcries of the host. The Hebrews were moving forward. Here and there a hardier spirit than the rest on the shaking walls sped an arrow, launched a spear, or shook a blade. Above the shrieks of terror rose shrieks, screams, oaths, orders, prayers, vain appeals to Baal and Ishtar. Then in thundering crash the massive walls went down.

Within the town houses were shaken together. Lights appeared here and there. Wood and furni-

ture caught fire. Above all rose a mighty voice of terror. The next instant, clambering over the rubbish heaps, entering the town on every hand, came the fierce-faced soldiers of the Lord. Not wolves to the slaughter leaped more fiercely than they. Here and there some yet undaunted Canaanite like Segub, or the king himself, made a swift stand only to be cut down by overwhelming enemies. Over the ruined walls, through the encumbered streets, searching the broken houses, raged and ravaged the desert fighters. The word was slay, kill. And no hot-blooded youth surpassed the grim, terrific fighter, Joshua, who allowed no one to pass him in the advance in spite of his years.

But one portion of the wall survived the great shaking of the Lord's hand which had cast down the rest. A certain house still stood, its front and back marked by a red cord. Foremost among the assailants of the town were Salmon and Dodai. Leaving the work of slaughter to others they ran to the house of Rahab. Clambering over the sundered wall on either side they dashed around to the platform which still stood and stopped before the door of the house.

"Abide thou here," cried Salmon to Dodai, "lest anyone filled with zeal forget the promise and attempt to put those within to the sword."

Judah and Benjamin had marched side by side. Salmon loved Dodai almost as if he had been his father and Dodai was devoted to the Prince of

Judah. The young man, who was also grateful to Rahab, saluted with his sword and took post at the door. It was well that he did so, for the swarming soldiers, overlooking the red cord in the diminishing light of the later afternoon, might have made short work of Rahab, her house attracting the more attention because of all upon the wall, as well as the wall itself, it alone remained intact amid the shock and the disaster.

Within the great room where they had been entertained before Salmon found Rahab and her family. He made a splendid figure in his bright armor, his shield and spear in hand, his sword hanging by his side, his steel cap covering his dark hair. At the further end of the room the people of the house were clustered together in terror despite the assurance they had received from the mistress of the house. As he entered, Rahab, her hands crossed upon her bosom, stepped forward. No longer did her dress gleam with purple and scarlet. She wore no broidered vesture of gold. Neither pearls nor jewels were wrapped about her neck and arms. No crown of precious stones adorned her head. Clothed in somber vesture with her hair unbound she approached him slowly. Her face unpainted was white in the dusk. Yet Salmon thought he had never seen countenance more lovely. Rahab knelt before him. Uncrossing her hands she extended them upward.

"My lord," she whispered, endeavoring to con-

trol her joy at the sight of him, "thou art come at last."

"Rise, woman," said Salmon gently. "Who are these?"

"My father and my mother, my brothers and my sisters and their little children, lord," she replied.

"None else are here?"

"None, lord. Many would fain have sought shelter with me, but thy bond-woman hath obeyed thy command."

"It is well," said Salmon. "The Prince of the Lord's host, the mighty Joshua, hath confirmed my promise. Thy life and the lives of those thou lovest shall be spared."

"My lord," said Rahab, "I have thought deeply since thy departure. None has come near me, though many were eager to do so. I have put away Baal and Ishtar." She rose and drew a curtain which concealed a niche in the wall. "Thou canst see their place is empty. They lie there." She pointed to a heap of fragments at the foot of the wall. She even went over to them and stamped upon them fiercely with her bare feet, cutting the tender soles on the sharp pieces of broken clay. "See, lord," she added, showing the blood of renunciation upon her white feet, and then she knelt humbly before him; "let thy people be my people," she whispered, "thy God, my God."

Salmon bent over her. He raised her up. He

put his arm about her. He pressed her to his heart.

"Thou shalt be my wife," he said, "Jehovah permitting."

"I am not worthy," whispered Rahab. "Think what I have been."

"Thou hast put thy past darkness behind thee," answered Salmon. "I think only of what thou shalt become in the light that shall shine before."

"Make me thy servant, thy slave," persisted the woman. "It is enough."

"Nay," said Salmon, "my wife."

VII

THE COUNCIL AT GIBEON

"YE have been called together, venerable brethren and fathers of the city, to decide what is to be done in the emergency that confronteth us. Ye are doubtless familiar, as I am, with the situation. Without in the antechamber, Prince Arami, the messenger of the royal Jebusite, awaiteth our answer to his master's demand. I had speech with him this morning and put him off until I could take counsel with you."

"And what demand made the messenger upon thee, most excellent Mālik?" interposed one of the venerable auditory.

"He set forth that Adoni-Zedec, the king of Jerusalem; Hoham, the king of Hebron; Piram, the king of Jarmuth; Japhia, the king of Lachish; and Debir, the king of Eglon, have made alliance together, having determined to try issue of battle with these fearful Israelites, of whose prowess we have heard and seen so much."

"And how doth that concern us?" interposed one of the chief councilors present.

"Intimately, by his demand."

"And what is that demand?" asked another.

"Alliance on equal terms with the five kings."

"And doth he include the other cities in the Hivite Confederation?" questioned a third.

"He said naught of that, but I assume so."

"And if we enter not upon such an alliance?" observed a third.

"War," said the Mālik, or presiding officer of the council of the elders of the city, a man corresponding fairly enough to a king in rank and importance, the government of Gibeon and the allied cities being of the nature of an autocracy.

"I have but recently returned from a voyage to Tharsish, in a ship of Tyre," outspoke one Dayan, the youngest of the score or more of the councilors assembled in the great hall of the palace, "and although the city is filled with rumors of these Hebrews, I have been so busy with mine own concerns that I have paid little heed to idle talk. I would fain be enlightened that I may give my vote intelligently."

"The issue, as I understand it, is either for our confederation to unite with the five kings and fall upon Israel or to seek the aid of the Israelites against the kings," promptly answered Abdmilki, the aged Mālik.

"And then have the confederated kings fall upon us," observed the most venerable of all those present, one Shem-Hadad, generally reputed the wisest of the council.

"Exactly so, therefore my question as to who are these Hebrews between whom and the five kings we must choose," said Dayan.

"Some time ago," said the Mālik, "a vast multitude of Hebrew slaves escaped from Egypt."

"Recently?"

"About forty years since."

"Where have they bided since?"

"In the deserts to the south."

"Under Sinai?"

"Even so. Well, they have conquered everyone who hath opposed them, Sihon, king of the Amorites; Og, the king of Bashan; Balak, the king of Moab, to say nothing of the Amalekites of the desert."

"If that be all," said the newcomer contemptuously, "there is little to be feared by a city so strong as Gibeon, to say nothing of its confederacies, much less of the five kings who invite us to join them. I give my vote for——"

"Wait, O impetuous Dayan," said the Mālik quickly, "thou hast not heard all."

"What more?"

"In numberless thousands they crossed the Jordan four months since."

"With the river in full flood?" asked Dayan incredulously.

"The waters were dried up by their God and they came over without difficulty."

"And Jericho?"

"Fell before them after but seven days of siege."

"And when did Jericho ever stand a siege?" asked Shem-Hadad caustically.

"Never! The great heat of the lowland hath ever taken the life and energy out of the hearts of its people. They are cowards all," explained the secretary of the Mālik.

"True," assented Abd-Milki.

"But this time," put in Itti-Bel, another councilor, "the earth shook, the walls of the city fell, and every living man, woman, and child, every brute beast even, was put to the sword. The gold, silver, and treasure, the furniture and provision, the Babylonish garments, the arms and armor, were all burned and destroyed, sacrificed by His own command to the terrible God of these Hebrews."

"Did they keep nothing?"

"Nothing. There is a strange story that hath come to us of one Achan who hid a treasure for himself."

"What befell him?"

"He and his whole family were stoned by the command of their God. A spy heard and saw and told."

"And what is the name of that God?" asked Dayan.

"I know not."

"I can tell thee," said one from the background who had not spoken heretofore.

"Thou art not a worshiper of Baal and Ishtar, O Ephron the Hittite," said the Mālik, looking toward the new speaker. "That we know. Hast thou knowledge of this Hebrew God?"

"I have. He is called Jehovah, a Name above every name."

"Blasphemer!" hissed out a man arrayed in the rich robes of a priest of Baal.

"Let him die the death!" cried another angrily.

"A sacrifice! To the Temple of Baal with him!" screamed a third.

In an instant the room was filled with tumult.

"That God, Jehovah, whom I serve will protect me from your wrath," answered Ephron, calmly rising and folding his arms and meeting the fierce glances of the councilors with unmoved countenance, "as He hath protected His people. But if not, so be it."

"Peace, all of ye, peace," interposed the Mālik, "this is not the time for unseemly brawling among ourselves. At my request the lord of Beth-Aram is here to give us counsel. We have graver matters to decide, brethren."

"This is the gravest matter," asserted the priest imperiously. "I demand this false Hittite as a sacrifice upon the altars of Moloch."

"Remember Jericho and Ai, and at thy peril lay hand upon me," answered Ephron, turning to confront the priest, entirely unabashed and unafraid.

"And what happened to Ai?" asked Dayan curiously.

"The same fate that met Jericho. The smoke hung like a pall above it. We saw it. And neither men, nor women, nor children were left to tell the

tale. The ruined walls alone related to our spies the story."

"Baal is angered with us for our sins!" cried the priest. "Ishtar hideth her face."

"Baal humbleth himself before Jehovah, and Ishtar concealeth herself behind the cloud for the same reason," answered Ephron stoutly. "My God hath spoken. This land is doomed for its sins. The cup of its wickedness is filled and runneth over. Jehovah hath raised up this people against it." His voice rose in spite of the murmurs of the others, which soon broke into derisive shouts and angry cries. "Silence, ye Hivites and Amorites," he cried, in turn at last, "I am a Hittite. My native people have fought on equal terms with Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria and have never given way. For four hundred years mine own people have lived among ye, nor is there aught against me in the mind of any here save that I do not bow the knee to Baal. Hear ye my advice."

"Silence," thundered the Mālik, "Ephron the Hittite is the friend of the Governor and of the Council of Gibeon. What hast thou to say? Speak freely."

"If ye would save your lives and the lives of your wives and children, your flocks and herds, your household goods, make alliance with these Hebrews, cast in your lot with them and do it quickly."

"But Adoni-Zedec?"

"The Jebusite king of Jerusalem and his confederates go to their doom. They will perish before the army of the Lord. They will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. But I am as a stranger among ye, only a temporary sojourner from time to time in your city. I should not be here at all had not the most excellent Mālik summoned me because he fancied that I knew these people. Four centuries ago my forefathers were the friends of Abraham, the wise and the magnificent, the friend of Jehovah; and from him they learned of this God whom they have worshiped ever since. Chance brought me in contact with two of the Hebrews four months since. I know none of them save these two. I have spoken. Nor will I stay here longer. If any seek me I shall be found at Beth-Aram. The God whom I serve can protect me there as well as in the city. Ye have heard my advice. Farewell."

"Go in peace, most excellent Ephron," answered the Mālik. "We thank thee for what thou hast said and will consider it well."

The priest of Baal would fain have stopped Ephron, but in the face of the statement of the all-powerful Mālik, and in view of the obvious fact that many of the councilors were yet undecided as to the course to be pursued, he had to content himself with black looks at the Hittite sheik. Ephron stood a moment, then, wrapping his coat about him and casting a long look around him, he turned and left the hall.

"Where are these Hebrews now?" asked the far voyager, who had propounded most of the questions.

"After the capture of Ai they went northward to Shechem to sacrifice to their God on Ebal and Gerizim, the high places. They returned but yesterday. All day long they have been filing down the way that leadeth past Michmash into the valley of the Jordan, and according to our spies they have encamped at Gilgal, whence they may be seen from the brink of the hills. Their black goats' hair tents stretch across the green sward in thousands."

"And what mean they next?"

"Nay, we know not surely, but it hath come to us that this whole land is devoted to destruction by their God and that they intend to sweep over it, carrying fire and sword and showing no mercy."

"As Ephron declared!"

"Even so."

"Can we stand against them?"

"Did Ai stand, did Jericho stand?"

"But these are not Gibeon."

"No," answered the Mālik, "but I confess that we have as little chance as they. The town lieth open to attack. If they should break the pool and drain away the spring, the rain water in our cellars would scarce give us drink for a week."

"But Adoni-Zedec and the four kings can do that, too."

"Undoubtedly. We are not strong enough to withstand either Israel or the Jebusite and his friends."

"Are we to be ground to pieces between upper and nether millstones, then?" asked Itti-Bel pertinently.

"By no means. We must make alliance with one or the other."

"There is still a third way," observed the priest of Baal.

"What is that?"

"We can die in defense of our altars, of our fires, our hearthstones, our people."

"That, of course," answered the Mālik, after a long pause, "if we must, but is it not wise to seek to live and serve our gods in peace in alliance with one or the other of these peoples?"

"Ye will doubtless so choose," said the priest contemptuously.

"We will do well to make alliance," said one man.

"Well, then the only question to be decided," said the Mālik, "is with whom we shall make an alliance."

"Is it known?" asked Dayan, "whether we can enter into an alliance with these Hebrews? Adoni-Zedec proffereth us his friendship and succor, but ye say that these strange people have devoted the whole of the land to destruction. What hope have we to change their decision with regard to ourselves?"

As this was in the nature of a puzzle, the members of the council looked at each other with increasing dismay. It was quite evident that they had little faith in the ability of the Jebusite king and his confederates to make head against these fearful invaders; yet unless they could in some way make agreement with these Hebrews, they would be forced into the arms of the confederation and would suffer the fate which Ephron so prophetically had said should be meted out to them. Neutrality was clearly impossible. The silence was broken by the oldest and wisest of the councilors again.

"Hear my words, brethren," began Shem-Hadad. "As between Adoni-Zedec and this people of Jehovah, my preference is for the strangers. The difficulty foreseen by my brother is a real one, yet I have thought of a way to overcome it."

He spoke very slowly and with long pauses between the sentences because of his age, and here the assembly broke into impatient interruptions.

"Peace, brethren, and hear me, I pray," he resumed when he could be heard.

"Respect the age of Shem-Hadad," said Abd-milki, the Mālik, severely, "and let him tell his tale in his own way."

"I thank thee, chief councilor," returned the other, "and my advice, then, is this: If we can persuade these Israelites that our city lieth far

in the hills yonder beyond the limits of the territory which they propose to overrun, and if in that deception we can get them to enter into an alliance which they will swear to keep by their God, we will have won our purpose."

"But when they discover," said the Mālik, "that we lie in the very center of the country they intend to occupy, what will happen then?"

"They will keep their word," said the old man. "I have known them of old in Egypt, where I spent part of my youth. When they take an oath before their God they will abide by it even to their own hurt."

"But how shall we convince them of the truth of that assertion, that our city lieth many days' journey from their camp?"

"In this way," said the old man, lowering his voice and setting forth the details of a stratagem as simple as it was likely to prove efficacious.

The councilors listened to him with a deep interest which merged into wonder and surprise until finally as he completed his speech, they broke into uproarious laughter.

"By Baal!" cried the high priest, "that is well thought on. We shall see if the God of the Hebrews cannot be outwitted by the children of Baal and Ishtar. I give my vote for the plan."

"And I mine!" cried Itti-Bel instantly, and the room was filled with shouts of approval and confirmation.

"It is so decided, then," said the Mālik. "Now

we shall have to see the messenger of Adoni-Zedec. Shall I reject the alliance and dismiss him?"

"Nay," said old Shem-Hadad, whose advice had been so acceptable, "it may be possible, and I mean no disrespect to our gods, that Jehovah may be awake and then they will refuse our alliance. In that case, it would be well to have another string to our bow. Let us not dismiss the proffer of Adoni-Zedec, Hoham, Piram, and the others, but hold it in reserve."

"Again the advice is good."

"But how shall we persuade them of our intentions?" asked Dayan, who always wished to know.

"Leave that to me," said the Mālik. He clapped his hands. Instantly two uniformed soldiers of the city appeared in the doorway. "Bring hither Arami, the messenger of Adoni-Zedec," said the chief councilor. "Worthy councilors, dispose yourselves with dignity to receive the ambassador of the Jebusite."

The Mālik sat down on a high chair placed on a dais, and the rest of the councilors resumed their seats and fell into their wonted order, when the messenger of Adoni-Zedec entered the room. He was clad in bright steel armor embossed with silver. His sword hung at his side, his round shield was on his left arm, and his Babylonian steel cap covered his head.

"We have sent for thee, noble Arami," said

the Mālik, as the company arose and bowed low before resuming their seats in acknowledgment of the messenger's presence, "to deliver our answer to the demands of thy royal master."

"And what is that answer?" asked the messenger.

"We have taken the matter of the alliance proposed to us by the royal Adoni-Zedec under advisement. As thou knowest, the city of Gibeon is only one member of a confederation. We deem it not wise to commit ourselves until we have taken the votes of the other communities within our alliance. Thou wilt say to thy master and his associates that we are overwhelmed with the honor he proposes for us, that without doubt we would be glad to enter into that alliance which hath been suggested, but that he must give us time to communicate with our allies and we will then deliver our answer."

"My master, the royal and noble king of Jerusalem, is not apt to be pleased with this reply, sirs," said the messenger haughtily. "In war time is everything. Our best chance is to fall upon this rabble of low-born people and escaped slaves without delay and drive them from the valley beyond the river back into the desert whence they came. If I know my royal master, he would have thine answer now."

"I cannot now give that answer," said the Mālik firmly. "Stands the matter as I have propounded it to thee. That is all."

"Perhaps I do exceed my power," said Arami, "but I will give ye five days and no more. If upon the fifth day, the five kings do not have your pledge, ye will be declared enemies."

"The time is but short," said the Mālik with great dignity, "nor are we free cities accustomed to such imperious speech; and but that there is wisdom in what thou sayest as to the need of haste, I would dismiss thee with a word. But, as thou hast pointed out, in war time is everything, and on the fifth day thy master shall have his answer. Nay," continued the Mālik, rising as Arami made to speak again, "thy quality as messenger hath protected thee in thine insolence. We have decided and thou hast heard. Say no more. On the fifth day thou shalt have our decision. Say I not well, brethren?"

"Well."

"Farewell, insolent Hivites," said the ambassador. "Beware, lest when I come again it be with the army which my master and his royal friends are assembling to enforce their will upon the timid of the land as well as to drive from it these Hebrews."

He turned haughtily on his heel and with his head held high made his way from the room.

"Five days," said one of the old councilors, "that meaneth the fifth day hence."

"It is enough," said Shem-Hadad. Our messengers can start at once. They will reach the Hebrew camp at Gilgal to-morrow. One day will

conclude their business, they can start back the next day and be here on the fourth day."

"Who shall compose the embassy?" asked the Mālik.

"At thine appointment," said Dayan, "any of us will go."

"Wilt thou head it?" asked the chief councilor of old Shem-Hadad.

"I am old and feeble, but——"

"Yet the plan was thine, thou must remember," cried Itti-Bel.

"I will go."

"And thou, and thou," said the Mālik, pointing to two other venerable men of importance and distinction in the Council.

"At thy request," they answered.

"And may Baal and Ishtar protect ye and give ye a safe journey and a happy issue to the plan so cunningly devised," said the chief councilor, rising and declaring the momentous discussion over.

"And may Jehovah sleep soundly and His followers disturb Him not when we have speech with them," muttered old Shem-Hadad, rising and summoning those appointed to go with him, that they might talk over the details of the undertaking.

VIII

THE UNLUCKY WOOING

THERE was no real reason why Arami should remain in Gibeon during the five days' grace which the Hivites had insisted should be allowed them. As a matter of fact, Jerusalem was so near Gibeon that he decided to make his report to his king in person, and having done that, the day after his momentous interview with the Hivite councilors, finding time hanging heavily upon his hands, he decided to take advantage of his enforced idleness to visit Beth-Aram and prosecute his wooing.

He had exchanged salutations with Ephron as the Hittite left the council chamber and he had ascertained that the lord of Beth-Aram had gone to his home. Therefore the next day, arrayed in his most brilliant garments and attended by a number of men of less rank, also in their brightest and most festive array, and accompanied by a guard of soldiers, for display only since there was peace between Ephron and Adoni-Zedec, he presented himself at the gate of the wall that closed the valley of the domain of Beth-Aram.

With characteristic hospitality, proverbial even then in the East, he was received by Ephron with

generous prodigality and magnificence. The oasis was large. The number of Ephron's following was great. He ruled over it with patriarchal authority, and as Arami had taken occasion to send word of his coming all things had been made ready. Even Arinna had decked herself for the occasion. She would not have been a woman had she not done that, albeit she looked forward to the interview with a certain amount of apprehension.

Ephron had allowed his daughter more independence by far than was usually granted young girls or even women in that day, and her influence over him was very great. In his fondness he denied her nothing. He loved her exceedingly, as she knew, but she was by no means sure that she could get her way in so important a matter as the disposal of her hand. Prince Arami was wealthy, distinguished, a famous soldier, high in the councils of the king of Jerusalem, who was the most considerable of the city kinglets of that section of Canaan.

Ephron was already allied by marriage to the formidable Hivite Confederation, which was quite strong enough to stand against any single city or its king, although it would be hopelessly overmatched by the confederation Adoni-Zedec was then forming. He had little to fear from them. It would be distinctly to his advantage to have an advocate at court in Jerusalem, his other warlike neighbor to the southward. At least that is the

way the matter had presented itself to him when Arami had first asked for Arinna's hand. His position was a little precarious on account of his religion, which was not that of the people of the land in which he dwelt.

The arrival of the Hebrews, however, had materially altered the situation. If their coming had been delayed to the following year the alliance would have been made and Arinna, not having seen Dodai, might not have been unwilling to have become the wife of the rich, powerful, and famous Canaanitish captain. After Ephron had met Salmon and Dodai he had instantly realized that that which told against him on the upland would be in his favor with the Hebrews; namely, that he would be bound to them by ancestral ties and because he was a worshiper of Jehovah.

If the Hebrews won in the approaching war, which he did not doubt would be the case, there would be no advantage to him in an alliance with the Canaanites. Indeed, such an association would be to his danger. As an individual he was probably as wealthy and powerful as any Canaanite noble, but he could not make head against any of the contending forces involved in this curious interplay of war. He must be under the protection of one or the other. If, now, he could marry Arinna to that young Hebrew prince that matrimonial alliance would certainly turn greatly to his advantage provided the Hebrews won. If they lost it would be his undoing.

As he had stated, Ephron did not think they would lose. It was part of his religion to believe that they would win, but, an alien in the land in spite of the long tenure of his family at Beth-Aram, he was not filled with that burning zeal for Jehovah that the Hebrews felt. His God was not so near to him as He was to those who in the tabernacle worshiped Him, who had seen Him in pillar of fire by night and in pillar of cloud by day. His faith, while it was strong enough to preserve him and his from the idolatries and absurdities and indecencies of the worship of Baal and Ishtar, was relatively weak.

He was a profoundly politic and an exceedingly able man. He balanced all these things in his mind and weighed them carefully. He decided at last to put off Arami and to bring about a marriage between Arinna and Dodai or some other of the Hebrews. His observation of their conduct that day Salmon and Dodai came to Beth-Aram and some questions of his daughter afterward, careless in seeming but with deep purport, had enlightened him as to the state of affairs between the young people.

There was but one thing that made him doubt the feasibility of his plans. Arinna was not a follower of Jehovah, although she held the religion of Baal and Ishtar lightly. He had carefully kept her from playing the part expected of women, horrible, sensual, and degrading, in the initiation into the worship of those beastly idols.

He reproached himself now for not having made greater efforts during the impressionable years of her youth to bring his daughter to his own way of thinking. It shows how lightly he held his religion that he had not hitherto deemed it to be of vital importance what she believed. He had attempted of late to discuss the matter with her, but she had declined to be convinced by his arguments, or had evaded them with laughter, or with a promise that some day she would consider them, but utterly refusing to be converted.

The importance of the matter lay in this, that Ephron had heard, as had all Canaan, of the fierce and implacable spirit of the Hebrews. It was not a war of conquest they were waging, but of annihilation. He shrewdly divined that they would never permit one of their race, especially a man so highly placed as the young Benjamite, to marry a Canaanitish woman who did not believe in their God.

Although Ephron preserved his usual calm and equable demeanor when he welcomed Arami at the oasis, his mind was filled with these delicate problems which gave rise to great anxieties. He had the impassivity of the Oriental to the full, however, and none of his perplexities showed in his greeting. It was not until the long and elaborate ceremonies incident to such a meeting had been completed and the repast set before his visitor had been consumed that the real business of the meeting was broached by the Canaanite.

"Doubtless thou dost realize the errand which hath brought me hither and enabled me to enjoy this noble hospitality," began Arami, with his usual directness.

"The pleasure I have taken in thy society," answered Ephron diplomatically, "hath left me no room for other thought."

"I thank thee. I am come to renew my suit for thy daughter," answered the Canaanite, dismissing the compliment and going straight to the mark, like the soldier he was.

"She is over-young to wed."

"That, I recall, was thine answer when I first sought her as wife a year ago."

"It was."

"I recognized its truth then. I have been very patient. She is well past the usual age at which our women wed. There are scores who have borne children already to their husbands although younger than she."

"That is true."

"Therefore unless thou hast other objections I press for an answer."

Arami spoke with great haughtiness and with no idea of a refusal. From his point of view it was a great condescension for him even to think of marrying the daughter of this oasis owner and foreigner, but he had seen Arinna and was genuinely in love with her. He had caused inquiries to be made about her. The fact that she had escaped the profanations and pollutions of the worship

of Baal and Ishtar, and would come to him with a purity he could not hope to find in other Canaanitish women, was most attractive to him. He took a haughty tone toward Ephron, which the other would have instantly resented were it not for the complexity of the issues involved. The Hittite could think of nothing to urge. He sat a long time in silence.

"Well," said the impatient Arami at last, "hast thou reflected enough? Thou knowest my power and influence with the king. It shall be exerted in thy favor. We are on the verge of troublous times. The peace of the land is broken. Thou wert at Gibeon. The things that are toward are not hid from thee."

"True, noble Arami. The air is filled with wars and rumors of wars. It is not time for marrying and giving in marriage, for feasting and merrymaking."

"In that I take issue with thee. I go to the wars with my king. Before I go I would establish Arinna in my house. Ishtar might bless me with a son to carry on my family should I by chance be killed."

"But——"

"No more. Wilt thou give her to me?"

Ephron was not willing to say yes, and he feared to say no. As a counsel of desperation he answered:

"Let the maiden speak for herself."

"How!" exclaimed Arami in amazement. "Do

ye Hittites allow a woman a voice in the disposal of her person?"

Such a thing had never crossed his mind; it was foreign to all his experience and directly opposed to the customs of the country, therefore he spoke his great surprise.

"She is only a child, my one ewe-lamb, the daughter of mine old age," urged Ephron in justification.

"Be it so," said Arami, falling in with the situation and confident that no woman on earth could reject him by any possibility for any reason.

Indeed, he was a splendid-looking, handsome soldier. Ephron clapped his hands and bade the slave who answered the signal summon the lady Arinna, who had withdrawn from the meal and room earlier in the afternoon.

Now, Arinna knew perfectly well the cause of Arami's visit. She had been advised of his previous offer and she realized that now at last he had come to receive a definite answer. Had it not been for the visit of Dodai there would have been but one answer to the question. Her good sense would have fallen in with her father's policy which he had taken occasion to set before her long since. Now, however, things were different. She was determined she would not marry Arami, and she came in nerved for the struggle. She had put off the rich robes she had worn for the feast and was now attired with almost the simplicity of a serving-woman in white garments

without decoration or ornament of any kind; yet the gorgeously bedizened Arami in all his barbaric finery found something not unpleasing in this sweet simplicity. And the opposition with which he was met had aroused his determination as the sight of her had completed his infatuation. He stood up and bowed low before her, which was an unusual condescension to a woman from such a one as he.

"Thou hast sent for me, father," began Arinna.

"I have, my daughter. Matters of great moment are pending between the noble Arami and myself."

"And do they concern me?"

"Intimately."

"Maiden," interposed Arami, who had no mind to be left out of the conversation, "I find thee fair. I will make thee my wife, the mistress of my house and possessions, the mother of my children, thou shalt carry on my line." He said this with a condescension almost royal!

"It is a great honor thou dost propose to me."

There was not the faintest shade of irony in her voice or bearing, yet the words caused Arami to look at her narrowly.

"Thou speakest truth," he said haughtily.

"And what doth my father say to thy suit?"

"To my great surprise, for it is not the custom of the land to consult a woman on such matters, he hath placed the decision in thine own mouth," he answered.

"I have loved thee," said Ephron, his anxiety apparent in his words. "I have no object in life but thy welfare. Couldst thou be happy with Prince Arami?"

"I am young to enter upon the duties of a wife."

"I am the judge of that," said Arami haughtily. "Thou art old enough for me."

"Give me time," pleaded the girl.

"It is a year since I first approached thy father. I must have thine answer now."

"What must be must be," answered Arinna. "If thou wilt have my decision to-day, to-day it is——"

She hesitated. Arami made an impetuous step forward, his face flaming. He thought that he had won. Ere he reached her the word came that stopped him.

"No," said the girl firmly.

The soldier stamped his foot.

"What!" he cried. "Thou wilt decline?"

"I will."

"And why?"

"I cannot allow thee to take this tone with one of my house," interposed Ephron with great dignity.

"Thine answer?" insisted the soldier, his face black with passion, taking no account whatever of Ephron's protest.

But Arinna had all the courage of her house and race. She faced him with perfect composure,

entirely undaunted. His loud voice and threatening gesture moved her not a whit.

"Art thou the only man in the world, Prince Arami?" she cried.

"There is someone else, then!" thundered the discomfited wooer, turning to Ephron. "Hast thou played me false? Lives not a man in Canaan who shall wed her upon whom I have deigned to look."

"I have done naught," said Ephron quickly, his own choler rising. "If God brought others to my door I am not responsible."

"Who is he? What is his name?" cried Arami, in full tide of his angry passion.

It was well that he had laid aside his sword, else he might have used it then and there.

"His name——" began Arinna.

"Tell it not!" cried her father, but the girl would not be stopped; she was proud of her lover, and had no fear for him.

"—is Dodai, a Hebrew."

"A slave and a son of a slave!" sneered the Canaanite.

"A prince and the son of a prince."

"I shall kill him. I shall tear his heart from his breast. I shall sacrifice him still alive to Baal. By him I swear, and when I have done so I shall take thee whether thou wilt or not, to be my wife or not, as I please."

"We have broken bread together. Thou hast eaten of my salt!" cried Ephron, now as angry

as the other. "I cannot resent thine insults, but begone."

"And how if I should take the woman now?" said Arami.

"Try it," answered Ephron stoutly. "Thy soldiers are without the walls. The gate is shut. My men hold it. There are but a few of ye here. Violate my hospitality, lift but a hand, and thou diest."

"For the last time thou wilt not give me the woman?"

"I give thee nothing but life. Go while I am in my present mood."

"When I come again, after we have dispersed this mob of slaves, I will come with force enough to turn this oasis into a desert. Thou and thine shall die, saving only this woman."

"Dost thou think," cried Arinna, "that I would live to be thy wife?"

"Brave words," sneered Arami, wincing under the biting scorn of her speech. "When I have killed thy lover, Dodai—I shall not forget the name—we shall see."

He turned away, summoned his followers, and stalked out of the room, followed by Ephron with the great body of his retainers fully armed lest some treachery should be attempted. He passed through the gates, which were opened to him, and summoning his soldiers marched away toward Jerusalem; murder and death and wounded pride and baffled love consuming his heart.

"Have we done well?" asked Ephron, rejoining his daughter after taking precautions against a surprise of the wall.

"Well indeed."

"Hast thou heard aught from that Hebrew of thine since his departure four months ago?"

"Not a word."

"Dost thou believe in his love?"

"I am sure of it."

"And that he will be true?"

"He will be."

"If he doth not save us we shall be ground between the upper and the nether millstone of these warring kings and peoples."

"By Baal and Ishtar," cried the girl, "hast thou no faith in that Jehovah of thine?"

"But thou dost not believe in Him."

"I shall," she answered quickly, "when I have learned more from Dodai's lips of Dodai's God."

IX

THE CAMP AT GILGAL

THE great camp of the Hebrews had been pitched at Gilgal, between the blackened walls on the ruined hill, whereon Jericho had once stood, and the Jordan River. With a natural love of nomadic, desert people for the sun, the Hebrews had avoided the groves of stately palm trees and their black or many-colored tents had been erected around a little hillock in the open fields whence they extended for long distances in irregular lines in every direction.

Upon that hillock, in the very center of the encampment, the gorgeously colored Tabernacle, with its curtains of vivid blue and deep purple and bright scarlet and its shining ornaments of brass, was erected. A large open space was left in front of the Tabernacle extending around it on either hand. On one side of this open space a group of larger tents indicated the abiding-place of Joshua and his staff. On the other side opposed to Joshua's headquarters a similar group of tents was occupied by Eleazar, the High Priest, his son the fiery Phinehas, and his brethren with the chief priests and Levites of the people.

In general the families belonging to each tribe

were grouped together and there were open streets between each tribal encampment. The tents were pitched without much order in the tribal groups in accordance with the convenience and the desires of their owners. Many of the lodges were large ones, and frequently a number of people could be sheltered in each one. Little fires blazed before the tents in every direction. In pots of brass, iron, and copper hanging over the fires the simple evening meal of the people was being prepared by the women while the men watched the children, seemingly numberless, at play. On the outskirts of the camp on every side sheep, goats, and cattle—spoil of their recent conquests, which had extended as far as Shechem—were pastured and tended by shepherds and herdsmen.

Armed guards were posted about the outskirts of the camp. A large body of men watched the fords of the Jordan. Other considerable bodies were stationed to the north and south, covering the two great highways running from the valleys over the ranges to the great plateau which formed, as it were, the backbone of the Palestine. The one to the northward led by Michmash to desolated Ai and thence across the range through the passes of upper and lower Beth-Horon to the fertile Shephelah or maritime lowlands, so densely populated and well cultivated. The other ran south past the grim valley of Achor by way of the Dead Sea and Engedi to Jerusalem and from

there along the top of the range into the desert southward.

Joshua, the son of Nun, the great man of Ephraim, and indeed of all Israel, having worthily succeeded Moses, had already shown himself a bold, able, and far-seeing leader and soldier. Joshua had no mind to be surprised by a sudden rush of Canaanites down either mountain pass upon the scattered camp with its thousands of women and children, from the great range of hills that towered some thirty-five hundred feet above the valley which lay far below the level of the sea. Therefore Caleb, the Kenizzite, the son of Jephunneh, his old comrade in arms and most trusted lieutenant, had command of the detachment on the Achor road. Salmon, son of Nahshon of the Tribe of Judah, had charge of the men at the Michmash pass; while to young Dodai, the son of Ahoah, of the Tribe of Benjamin, who had showed himself a brilliant and dashing soldier in the campaigns already completed, was given charge of the camp guard, composed of picked young men from all the tribes who were especially devoted to their great captain. To complete their watch Paltiel, the son of Azzan of the Tribe of Issachar, held the fords of the river with sufficient force to prevent any danger from wandering Moabite survivors of the war.

On that day the withering heat of the Jordan valley, sunk so far below the level of the sea, was somewhat tempered by the evening breeze

which blew with refreshing coolness over the waters of the river and the broad salt sea into which it poured its flood. The Israelites had but lately returned from their long march to and from the holy place in the north country for the re-reading of the law at Shechem on the slopes of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. They had come back to their camp at Gilgal because of the pasture afforded by the fertile valley and because it was a convenient point from which to prosecute the campaigns which, now that the solemn ceremony of the re-reading of the law had ended, was the design of Jehovah for His people. And Joshua was giving his men of war a short rest before undertaking active operations. He intended to continue to occupy and hold both passes with a force which would enable him to leave the women and children and old men, too feeble for hard campaigning, safe in camp at Gilgal, while he prosecuted his campaign to the westward.

He was seated in front of his tent, surrounded by some of the princes of the tribes, quietly discussing the situation as he partook of his evening meal. The peace of the evening was disturbed by a sudden tumult, heard above the various babble and noises of the great camp. Shouts and hails were cried, trumpets were blown. The noise came from the nearest of the posts on the Michmash road. Although Joshua was an old man, his natural faculties appeared to be no whit abated, and he caught the unusual sounds as

quickly as the youngest councilor present. He rose slowly to his feet and turned in the direction whence it came, a striking and magnificent figure, seen in the twilight, its gathering dimness dispelled by the bright blaze of the fire before him.

Tall, upright, broad-shouldered, powerful, gray-headed, with his gray beard cut short like that of a soldier rather than flowing like that of a priest, he was the beau-ideal of a prince and leader. He had laid aside his armor and was clad in girded tunic and sandals. Upon his head he wore a conical cloth cap wrapped with a species of turban. Over his shoulders fell a voluminous mantle of black, his tribal color, striped with red and white, which he gathered about him with his left hand. Jericho had been devoted to Jehovah with all it contained, but the goods and belongings of the other cities, such as Ai, which had fallen to the Hebrews, had been taken as spoil. The mantle was of the choicest Babylonian weave, beautifully embroidered in gold and set off the splendid figure of the man admirably.

"There is a noise of challenge and welcome," he said slowly in his deep voice, with no sign of age but its richness. "Someone cometh. I would that——"

The next moment, through the circle of tents, a young man in full armor appeared hurriedly. He stopped before Joshua, spread out his hands widely, bowed low before him, and waited.

"Thou hast a message?"

"I have."

"Deliver it."

"Strangers, declaring themselves an embassy from a far country, have approached the guards on the Michmash road and have been stopped at the boundaries of the camp. They seek an interview with thee and the princes of Israel."

"Conduct them hither at once. Say to them that they shall come and go in safety."

The messenger bowed again, turned on his heel, and fled away as rapidly as he had come. Joshua turned to a group of young men, armed, who stood back of his tent, waiting to do him service.

"Go, some of ye," he said, "and summon the princes and elders of Israel to meet me here at once. And Eleazar, the High Priest, and Phinehas and such of the chief priests and principal Levites as can conveniently attend, bid them here also."

In an instant, for Joshua was served with unquestioned obedience and military promptitude, the members of the little group who acted as his aides were running through the camp. Presently by twos and threes, the warrior chiefs and elders of the tribes approached the tent of Joshua.

The men of war were clad in such armor as they fancied. The Hebrews had no facilities for making armor as yet, and what they possessed had been taken from the enemy or brought from Egypt. There was little uniformity in their weapons, offensive or defensive, and what they

wore for protection varied from the skins of animals to the most costly mail—if such their iron-reinforced skin tunics could be called—or plates, of the time, made in countries as far apart as the land of the Hittites, the Mesopotamian territory, or the banks of the Nile itself. And there were Canaanitish weapons and dress also, spoil of more recent campaigns. Most of them wore some kind of helmet or casque, and all of them carried shield and sword and spear and there were many bows among them. The princes were followed by the standard bearers of the tribes. Conspicuous among them was the staff bearing the crude representation of the lion, the cognizance of the great Tribe of Judah; but the mandrake of Reuben, the ship of Zebulon, the hind of Naphtali, the snake of Dan, and all the others were there also.

The councilors and the aged fathers of the tribes, being men of peace, were habited in white garments with white pointed caps rising above their turbans. They wore long cloaks, some of them of many colors, over their white tunics.

The High Priest was dressed in his long white ephod of fine linen over the me'il, the undergarment of blue, elaborately embroidered where it showed beneath the tunic. To the bottom of this blue robe or cassock little bells were attached which tinkled softly yet musically as he walked. The ephod was belted at the waist by a variegated linen girdle of blue, white, purple, and scarlet.

As the coming council did not appear of grave importance Eleazar did not wear the jeweled breastplate containing the packet in which he kept the Urim and Thummim, or sacred lots, which usually depended from his shoulders. His head was covered by a lofty turban of white and blue on the front of which a gold plate was fastened bearing this inscription, HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH.

The attendant priests and the heads of the Levites were clad in turbans and girdled linen ephods of similar shape but simpler and less splendid in their fittings and adornments. The warrior princes ranged themselves on one side in a group. The venerable wise men and tribal councilors placed themselves together in another group. The High Priest stationed himself near Joshua with the other priests and Levites. They made a brilliant group back of their hierarchical chief in spite of their grave and serious air and bearing.

These all, being welcomed by Joshua in turn and on their approach, each one in accordance with his degree and importance, seated themselves in great circles upon the ground about the fire, which had been replenished so that it blazed brightly. Bronze lamps hanging by chains from the lofty poles of the tent, which was open to the fire, and blazing torches in the hands of attendants quickly summoned also added to the illumination. It was now quite dark, the moon would not rise for some hours, and the only

natural light was that cast by the stars, shining brightly in the cloudless sky. Eleazar and the priests did not sit down with the rest, but stood with Joshua, who also remained upon his feet. Close to Joshua the soldier messengers who had called all to the Council ranged themselves in ordered ranks. The firelight was reflected from the golden turban plate of the High Priest and from the armor of these young warriors. As it was yet early in the evening the outskirts of the Council were surrounded by constantly increasing rows upon rows of anxious and interested people, including not a few women and some of the older children.

A way had been left open in the direction of Michmash, whence the first messenger from the camp guard had come, and presently, winding through one of the passageways between the groups of tents, a number of men presented themselves before the great assembly of the Hebrews. In the lead were the armed Israelites of the guard. Following them came several venerable men of dignified and imposing presence. After these men, who were preceded by a veritable patriarch white-bearded and old, a few of the asses of the country were led by servants. The rear was brought up by more of the armed guards.

The captain of the guard halted at the edge of the circle of councilors and saluted by raising his spear, spreading out his hands, and bowing low.

"Speak," began Joshua, breaking the respectful pause.

"The strangers who sought speech with thee and whom thou hast commanded to be brought, are here," he said.

"It is well," answered Joshua. "Open the ranks and bid them advance. Bide ye all where ye stand for further order after I have had speech with them."

The captain turned, a sharp command fell from his lips, the soldiers divided, and the old men who followed them stepped slowly forward. As they came into the firelight and the illumination of the lamps and the torches, it was at once seen that their dress ill comported with their age and apparent station. Although the light was not bright it was sufficient to reveal that the garments worn by these strangers, apparently once rich and highly ornamented, were now old, dust-covered, and tattered. Their clothes presented such an appearance as would naturally be the result of steady wear on a very long, hard journey. And this was somewhat surprising, as people of that day, and especially ambassadors, invariably considered it a part of dignity and propriety to present themselves before foreign powers in their best and most expensive and beautiful habiliments. It was a way of showing the importance of the people and the monarch they represented.

"Strangers," said Joshua courteously, "around ye are captains and councilors of Israel and

here standeth the High Priest of Jehovah, our God. Come ye in peace or in war, for this night I bid ye welcome."

"Art thou that Joshua, the son of Ephraim, of whom we have heard?" asked the oldest stranger.

"I am."

"And thou hast command of this so great people?"

"By the grace of God, I have."

"Sir," said the ancient ambassador, bowing low before him, "we are thy servants ever."

"And who are ye?" asked the Hebrew, "and whence come ye?"

"We come to beg thy protection, to offer thee our submission, and if we be found worthy to enter into an alliance with thee."

"We enter into no alliance with the Canaanite," said Joshua sternly.

"Thou hast well said," broke out the clear voice of impetuous Phinehas, "the Canaanite is an abomination to Jehovah and He hath devoted him to destruction."

"Thou hearest the son of the High Priest?"

"My lord," answered the old man gravely, "we come from a far country; we be no Canaanites. But the day is far spent and night is upon us. As thou seest, thy servants are old men and weary. We have traveled the long day, and it is but one of many days. Of thy kindness, permit us to make camp, to eat and drink, to rest and sleep. If thou wilt see us in the morning——"

"Have thine own way," said the Hebrew. "Yonder is an open space. Thou mayst pitch thy tents there. If thou needest anything ask and thou shalt receive it."

"We thank thee for thy courtesy and consideration, and we ask nothing from thee for the night save the permission to erect our tents and to rest therein."

"Thou hast it. After the morning sacrifice we will hear thee again upon this matter. Thou hast leave to withdraw."

X

THE LYING AMBASSADORS

THE next day after the morning sacrifice the elders of Israel assembled once more as before. On the outskirts of the camp a grove of palm trees reared their stately heads and afforded shade from the fierce glare of the sun. There Joshua led the princes of the tribes, and there beneath the shade of the broad leaves he received the embassy. The guard at the camp had been changed, and nearest to Joshua stood his most beloved and trusted young officer, Dodai, son of Ahoah. His tour of duty with the camp guard having terminated, he was now in command of the group of personal aides to the great captain. In addition to his armor he had draped over his shoulders and belted about his waist a lion's skin, the pelt of the beast he had slain at Beth-Aram. It made him the envy of all the young men and the admiration of all the young women of the camp. Salmon had told the tale, and it had lost nothing from his lips.

Salmon himself, unfortunately as it turned out, was not present. He had not yet been relieved of his guard. In the foremost ranks of the people surrounding the group under the trees, who drew

as near about the circles of the princes as the guards would allow, stood Rahab, whom Salmon had recently taken to wife; Joshua, Eleazar, and the elders consenting thereto, since she had become a devout worshiper of Jehovah and had repudiated her false gods and mended her evil ways.

In the midst of this great and imposing assemblage the embassy confronted Joshua. The brightness of the morning light showed even more plainly the dilapidated condition of their attire. The borders of their long, dusty garments were tattered and hung in strips about their feet, their leather sandals were almost worn through. Their patched cloaks were weather-stained, as if they had slept many nights covered only by these mantles. They were faded, too, as if from long exposure. Their equipment was in even worse condition. The packs on the backs of the asses were in a state of extreme dilapidation. There were patches on the water-skins and the leather wine-bottles. The aspect of the strangers was truly as forlorn as it was remarkable.

Naturally, it was Joshua who began the interview. Indeed, the deputation waited humbly for him to speak.

"Ye came to us last night seeking our favor, and we postponed, at your request, a discussion of the matter until this morning. Speak now. What would ye of us?"

"Mighty Lord and great Prince," slowly began

old Shem-Hadad, after a low obeisance, "from a far country that lieth beyond the mountains and to the northward of the great sea have thy servants come. We be Hivites. The Canaanites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and all the people of this land are an abomination unto us as unto thee."

"Are ye worshipers of Jehovah?"

"Nay, in our darkness and ignorance we have worshiped Baal and Ishtar, the gods of our fathers."

"Death to the idolaters!" cried Phinehas suddenly, and his voice carried far over the Council and his words were taken up here and there for low murmurs echoed through the Council and came in louder acclaim from the spectators.

"Peace," exclaimed old Eleazar in rebuke to his fiery son.

"Be still, young man," said Joshua reprovingly. "Strangers, speak on."

"Hear us yet farther, O Prince of the Hebrews, and ye, noble councilors. We have heard of your mighty God, Him whose name thou hast pronounced in our ears, O Joshua! We know how great a God He is, of the wonders that He did for ye in Egypt, and because of His name and the fame of Him are we come hither."

"Hear, O strangers, the Lord our God is one Lord!" cried Joshua, lifting his hand.

"Blessed and Holy be His name," added Eleazar solemnly.

"Amen," said the leader of the embassy.

His manner was perfect. Long years of practice had made him past master in duplicity. Indeed, in the ethics of the day, such efforts as he was making would be counted highly praiseworthy and success a thing to be congratulated upon. And his voice, manner, and bearing deeply impressed the Hebrews.

"We have heard also what He hath done for ye in the desert, how ye put the Amalekites to the sword——"

"In the valley of Rephidim," interposed Joshua, smiling grimly as the memory of that fierce battle in which he had led the Lord's hosts came back to him.

"Even so," added the wily spokesman, bowing humbly.

"What more?" asked the Hebrew.

"We have heard also what He did to the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan," said the old man, pointing out over the valley and across the river to the distant hills of Moab in the east, "to Sihon, king of Heshbon, and to Og, king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth."

"Well," exclaimed Joshua proudly, amid a spirited acclaim from the princes and elders, in the martial recollections awakened by the roll-call of their glorious triumphs.

The simple-minded, desert-born Hebrews were intensely pleased and gratified that the story of their conquests and the signal favor of God which

He had bestowed upon them had penetrated to the far-off land of these venerable strangers,—evidently, in spite of their dilapidation, persons of great importance in their own country. Shrewd old Shem-Hadad was not unobservant of the effect of his delicate flattery.

"Wherefore," resumed the old man, more deferentially than ever, "our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake together——"

"And what said they?"

"This was their counsel, lords. 'Take victuals with you for the long journey and go to meet these people traveling in the greatness of their strength, and say unto them, "We are your servants, therefore now make ye a league with us. Ye shall protect us from the Canaanites and we shall serve ye faithfully. We will fight by your side and do whatever ye command us. We will acknowledge your God as greater than the god of the Hivites."' "

"Who is the king of your land? How is he named?"

"We have no king, lord. We be free people and are ruled by the elders of the city, of whom I am the least worthy," answered Shem-Hadad with excessive humility.

"What is the name of thy city and country, then?" continued Joshua.

"It is a fair city, indeed."

"But how is it called?"

"Gibeon," answered the old man, shrewdly

surmising that no man there had heard the name of the town.

And indeed no man had except one. All eyes were fixed upon the speaker, and none marked the violent start given by Dodai as he heard the name. The young man half stepped forward to speak, recollected himself, stopped suddenly and fell back into his place, his face paling beneath his helmet as he realized the deception to which he made himself a party by remaining silent.

"And where lieth that city of thine?" asked Joshua unsuspiciously.

"My lord, as I have told thee, far hence; so many days' journey indeed that thy servants have lost count." The old man now beckoned to his attendants. One of them led two of the asses into the inclosure. "Thou mayst judge for thyself," he said, and the father of lies himself could not have done it more speciously and effectively, "I am Shem-Hadad, of an ancient house and noble lineage. I have enough and to spare of this world's goods. I know that I appear before thee in garments not befitting my station and people. These that are with me are men of importance among us. Our clothes were new and our sandals when we started. They have been worn out in the journey."

"These bottles of wine," said the second ambassador, pointing toward the skins hanging half empty and flaccid from the backs of the asses,

"were new and full; and behold they be rent and torn and patched. Indeed, we have come a great distance and for many days from a land beyond the setting of the sun."

"This our bread," said a third, "we took hot for our provision from our ovens. It was fresh from out of our houses the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry and it is moldy."

"This sack of salt, from the waters of the Great Sea, was full," said the first speaker. "We have used it up."

"Look at the poor beasts of burden, how weary they are," added the third; "it is the length and hardship of the journey that hath broken them down."

"It is well," said Joshua, amid expressions of approval from the councilors, who were all convinced by this ocular demonstration. "Had ye been Canaanites and dwelt in their land, there could have been no peace between us, because we have made an oath to blot them out, to dispossess them of their land, to take possession of their flocks and herds and to ruin their cities and all that they have, and to put them to the sword. Even as we did unto Jericho so will we do unto them."

"Jehovah hath commanded it," said Eleazar.

"But because ye have heard of our God," continued Joshua, nodding in confirmation of the High Priest's words, "and because ye speak us

fair, we will enter into an alliance with ye. We will spare your city, ye shall fight with us against our enemies, and we will protect ye against yours. Say I well, brethren?"

"Well, indeed," said Phinehas, the zealot, and with the approval of so uncompromising a patriot and so true a worshiper of God to encourage them the whole assemblage broke into shouts of hearty approbation.

"Methinks," whispered one man to his neighbor, "that we would do well to inquire of God whether it be right for us to enter into this alliance or not," but his voice was lost in the shouts and acclamations, and no one else, not even Eleazar, thought to put the question to Jehovah.

The pride of the Israelites was greatly flattered by the fact that their fame had extended into distant countries, even to that far-off Gibeon, wherever it lay.

"Come hither, elders of the tribes," said Joshua as the tumult finally stilled.

The leaders of the twelve great tribes of Israel rose and presented themselves before Joshua.

"Thou, too, Eleazar," said the leader. "Now, Shem-Hadad," he continued, "we are ready to enter into an alliance with thee and with thy brethren."

"Lord," said Dodai suddenly, starting forward.

Joshua turned upon him a stern look of surprise.

"Art thou one of the princes of Israel, boy,"

he said in great surprise, "that thou shouldst interrupt our counselings?"

"But, my lord," muttered the young man.

"Thou wilt be silent," said Joshua sternly.

Dodai hung in the wind a moment, doubtful whether to continue or not while his captain surveyed him with growing amazement and not a little indignation. Then he bowed low and stepped back into his appointed place, his face paling again.

"Rahab, the woman of Jericho, would fain speak to thee," said one from the outskirts.

"Is the great assembly of the Israelites to be interrupted by youths and women?" asked Joshua in great displeasure.

"Bid her be silent," said Phinehas, who was nearest to her.

These interruptions had caused some confusion, but it soon quieted down. Joshua, the High Priest, the Elders of Israel, and the Gibeonites stood in the center of a great circle.

"Give me of that bread of thine," said Joshua, "and of the remainder of the sack of salt."

They were handed to him at once. Joshua broke the bread into little pieces and sprinkled salt upon them. The pieces were passed around among the Gibeonites and the chiefs of the Israelites, who participated in the ceremony. The High Priest blessed the bread, and they all partook of it.

"As we have broken bread and eaten it with salt

together, ye are our friends forever. Peace be between us and ye," said the old Hebrew. "We accept thine offer, we make league with ye. In war or in peace our aims, our desires, and our efforts are one."

"Hear, O Jehovah," said the High Priest, lifting his hands, "the words we have spoken!"

Joshua, thereupon, lifted his hand as did the other princes of Israel and repeated the solemn words.

"Hear, O Jehovah, the oath we have sworn!"

"For our part," said Shem-Hadad, lifting his hands also, "we are your servants ever. Ye shall command and we will obey. We have broken bread and eaten salt together. We shall bow our gods to thine. We have taken the oath as ye have. Now ye will permit us to return on our way to our own land, to tell to our people what we have received of your favor."

"Presently," said Joshua hospitably. "Nay, ye must be our guests. We will provide ye with new garments and outfit ye for your journey on the morrow."

"Thy princely generosity overwhelmeth us," said Shem-Hadad. "Wilt thou permit me to question thee further? We have heard, as I have said, what your God permitted ye to do in Egypt and to the Amalekites and the Amorites, thereafter; but on our way hither we passed by the ruins of Ai. It was a populous town when we heard from it last. And yonder," he pointed back-

wards, "stood Jericho. What hath thrown them in the dust?"

"Thou hast not heard?" asked Joshua.

"We have not."

"The Lord smote them by our arms. At Jericho we left not one stone upon another save the house that thou seest yonder on the broken pieces of the wall. That was the house of one Rahab, who had entertained our spies and whom with her people we had promised to let live."

"And this Rahab?"

"She is here in the camp and hath married Salmon, a prince of the house of Judah, having professed her belief in the one God, Jehovah."

"My lord," said Shem-Hadad, instantly alive to the peril in the presence of the Canaanitish convert, who knew exactly where Gibeon lay and who would instantly and infallibly expose the deception if given the opportunity, "despite thy proffered hospitality, I and my brethren must leave at once. If thou wilt give order that food and drink be bestowed upon us sufficient for our journey we will take our departure. Our way is long. Our people will grow sick at heart waiting for tidings. It would be happiness to rest here with ye but we must go. Should ye come into the far country where Gibeon lieth, ye will find our gates open, our houses and our goods yours, our men ready to go with ye."

"I would that ye could tarry here a little, but have thy way," answered Joshua. "As we in-

tend to overcome the whole land from the north to the south and as your country bordereth upon the north, we shall find ye. Farewell. The assembly is broken up. To your tents, O Israel!"

XI

THE OUTCAST FROM THE LORD

THERE was something portentous about the haste with which Shem-Hadad and his companions took their departure. By Joshua's command, changes of raiment, new wine-skins, fresh provisions, and other things they needed for their journey were offered to them freely. They took little or nothing. In fact, their departure was so hurried that it verged on the point of discourtesy and their unseemly haste left the chiefs of the houses of Israel in a state of singular astonishment, not to say perturbation! They were utterly at a loss to understand the cause of their unaccountable speed, and some faint suspicion that perhaps everything was not as it should be had already begun to enter their minds. There was nothing tangible, however, upon which to base their growing uncertainty, and with the departure of the strangers the subject was presently dismissed.

It was the custom of Joshua to devote certain hours in the morning, as Moses had done, to hearing the complaints of the people and adjusting their differences. So he judged the people. At these hours anyone in the camp from the high-

est to the lowest had access and recourse to the great captain. He usually sat on a pile of cushions in the shade of his tent at such times, and the young men who were so proud to serve him personally marshaled the petitioners and grievance bearers so that they presented themselves one by one and without confusion.

Among those who were the first in the long line of applicants for an interview was the Canaanitish woman who had married Salmon, whose life with that of Dodai she had saved by her wit and courage when they were spying upon Jericho. In no short time her turn came, and she was at once ushered into the presence of the great Ephraimite judge and captain.

Joshua knew her very well. In the first place, Salmon, her new husband, was one of the chief men of the important tribe of Judah. And in the third place, before the marriage had been solemnized, the matter had been laid before the Council of Princes and the High Priest, and their consent obtained. The Israelites looked with little favor upon matrimonial alliances with alien peoples. Joshua also remembered that in the conference with the embassy from Gibeon, earlier in the morning, Rahab had endeavored, most improperly for a woman and especially an alien woman, to interrupt the deliberations of the elders with speech of her own. Therefore, he greeted her with unwonted sternness and severity of manner and voice.

"Thou art that Rahab," he said, "the Canaanitish woman whom Salmon of the house of Judah hath espoused. Thou didst seek to speak to me this morning while I was engaged in grave business of the people. It was most unseemly for a woman."

Rahab was beautiful, she was proud, she was accustomed to deference and to having her own way, yet there was something in the stern majesty of the great Hebrew that awed her in spite of herself.

"My lord, I had knowledge of these people and of their city, and perhaps since Salmon, my husband, is absent with the guard, I alone of all here knew that they were deceiving thee."

"Deceiving us. What meanest thou?" cried Joshua, his suspicions suddenly aflame.

At that instant, Phinehas and one or two of the elders came across the intervening space and by chance overheard his words. They hurried to the side of their leader.

"Explain thyself, woman," said Joshua, waiting until the others were in place.

"Gladly, my lord. These people declared unto thee that they came from a far country beyond the setting of the sun and to the northward of the Great Sea."

"Well?"

"They lied to thee."

"Impossible, they showed us evidence of their long journey!"

"Prepared for the purpose evidently. They had heard of thy victories at Moab."

"They knew not of the fall of Jericho and Ai."

"My lord, they saw the smoke of Ai rising into the heavens."

"And whence?"

"From their own city."

"From Gibeon?"

"Even so."

"Where lieth it?"

"Yonder," said the woman, pointing straight up to the range of mountains towering above them and to the northward a little, "on the upland but a few miles from Ai at the beginning of the road that leadeth down through the passes of Beth-Horon to the lowland and to the Great Sea."

"It is impossible."

"Forgive thine handmaiden, lord, but I speak that I do know and testify that I have seen. The old one is chief among the councilors of Gibeon. He hath been entertained at my—my inn—in Jericho in the days past. I remembered him at last. They are Canaanitish people like the rest of us, Hivites though they be called, and worshipers of false gods—abominations to the Lord," she went on with all the earnestness of a new convert. "Thou hast been deceived, outwitted by the wily old man. Gibeon is a fair city and standeth by the great pool upon a high place at the very summit of the upland."

The dark face of Joshua flushed red. He smote

his hands together fiercely, and then he bowed his head.

"We have done ill," he said in great humiliation, casting dust upon his head as he spoke. "Eleazar," he continued to the slowly approaching High Priest, who had heard the tidings, for Rahab's voice had been raised unconsciously so that her dreadful words were audible far and wide, "we should have inquired of the Lord by Urim and Thummim before we made this alliance."

"It is not too late to revoke our foolish and evil oath," ventured one old man of the tribe of Simeon who stood by.

"An oath is an oath," answered the High Priest gloomily. "The fault is mine. I am Jehovah's priest. I should have advised thee."

"What is to be done now?" asked a third.

Joshua sat with bent head, thinking deeply.

"They have been gone scarcely two hours," he said at last, "they are old men and can at best travel but slowly. Dodai——"

"My lord," answered the Benjamite, stepping forward from his place in the ranks of the young men in attendance.

"Why, this man knew!' cried Rahab, unthinkingly. "I was a woman and was denied speech with thee. I saw him by thy side. Why did he not tell thee the truth?"

"It is impossible that he could have known," said Joshua. "Where got he the knowledge?"

"He was with Salmon," answered Rahab, "Salmon, my lord and husband, when I let them down from the house on the city wall and gave them arms and bade them seek shelter in the mountains until they could cross the Jordan."

"Well," said Joshua, fighting against a growing conviction.

"My lord," interposed Dodai, his face paler than ever, his voice tremulous, his heart in his mouth.

"Silence," said the captain, "let the woman finish her story."

"My lord," began Rahab, hesitating as she saw the anxiety and shame, not to say apprehension, in Dodai's face. "I—perhaps I was wrong —I——"

"Woman, thou art concealing something from me," interposed Joshua severely. "Go on with thy story and keep nothing back."

"Speak on, I beg thee," added Dodai to the great astonishment of Joshua and the elders that he should so presume.

Now Rahab was in a fearful dilemma. Next to her husband she was most beholden to this young man, and he stood high in her affections. It was obvious that he was in trouble and through her speech. She would fain have saved him, but in the present state of affairs she could see no way. However much her reluctance she had no recourse but to speak on, but it was with a very miserable and subdued air that she proceeded.

"Salmon hath told me how he and that Dodai yonder climbed the mountain and fell in with a man and woman who dwelt in a place hard to come at, an oasis known as Beth-Aram. They told him they lived in a town hard by called Gibeon, in the winter. But the youth may not have known," she faltered in vain effort at excusing him.

"Thou hast undone me," said Dodai under his breath.

"I would sooner have cut out my tongue," whispered the woman in reply.

"It was thy duty to speak and mine. I forgive thee."

Rahab wished too late that she had said nothing about it, though being a new convert she could scarcely yet realize what the situation imported for the young soldier.

"What hast thou to say to this?" said Joshua. "Speak now."

"My lord," began the young man, realizing the impossibility of denial, for which indeed he had no wish, "it is even as the woman hath said."

"And thou didst allow us to be deceived and fooled by these people?"

The young Benjamite bowed his head and stood the very picture of despair and humiliation before them all.

"Woe, woe!" broke from the lips of one of the elders.

"Shame on thee, thou traitor!" cried a soldier.

"Now by the God above us——" began Joshua

in a loud voice, rising to his feet and staring at the circle of excited people rapidly growing about him.

"Wait," hurriedly interposed Elidad, the son of Chislon, the Prince and head of the Tribe of Benjamin, coming forward with the venerable Ahoah, the father of Dodai, "I do recall that the young man attempted to speak to thee, but thou didst silence him."

"Mercy, O Joshua! He would have spoken," pleaded the grief-stricken father.

"It may be so," admitted Joshua, who was above all things a just man. "Was it thine intention to tell me the truth, thou Dodai, son of Ahoah?"

"That was my purpose, but in the face of thy prohibition——"

"Thou shouldst nevertheless have shouted it aloud with all thy voice," said Joshua sternly. "Didst thou not know of the arrival of these strangers and whence they came the night before?"

"Yes, lord," admitted the young soldier, resolved to make a clean breast of it when it was perhaps too late. "When I was relieved of my guard last night those who were present when they came told me and I overheard the word Gibeon from one of their servants as I passed their tents."

"And didst thou not suspect that they were from Gibeon?"

"I knew it."

"Why didst thou not seek me out, then? Thou hadst access to me. Why didst thou not tell me?" thundered the old man, and giving the younger no time to answer he went on inexorably: "Thou hast humiliated us, thou hast shamed us, thou hast been false to thy people and to thy God. The punishment of Achan should be meted out to thee."

"As my lord willeth," said Dodai quietly, but holding himself the more erect and facing Joshua with an undaunted look which awakened the respect of every one of the auditors of the strange scene as old Ahoah broke into low but bitter lamentations, while from the crowd came the piteous outcries and weeping of Dodai's mother and sisters, who had hurried thither.

"My lord," faltered Rahab, summoning her courage, "I do repent me that my thoughtless tongue hath plunged this young man——"

"Silence, woman," said Joshua sternly. "Wilt thou tell me, O young man that I have loved, before I pass sentence upon thee, why thou hast acted so madly?"

"My lord," said the younger man, honestly resolved to make a clean breast of it all, "there is a maiden of Canaan who welcomed and sheltered Salmon and myself in our extremity after our escape from Jericho. Her father is Ephron the Hittite. Her mother was a Hivite of that city of Gibeon, and she herself hath not yet seen the

light of Jehovah, our God. I—I——" He faltered, his pale face flushing. "I would not have her put to the sword, I——"

"And for the love of a woman, a Canaanitish outcast," exclaimed Joshua bitterly, "thou hast played the traitor to thy God."

Now there were things that Dodai could have urged in his defense. In the first place, before it was too late he actually had endeavored to speak out and Joshua had silenced him. Of course he should not have allowed himself to be silenced. In the second place Arinna, the daughter of Ephron, who was an undoubted follower of the true God, had been much impressed with Dodai's words and her conversion might already have been accomplished by her father. She was scarcely "a Canaanitish outcast" under the circumstances as Joshua, not possessed of all the facts, had said so cuttingly. But matters had gone too far for argument now, the time for such statements and appeals appeared to have passed, so with the stubborn pride and haughty resolution of youth the young man said nothing. Indeed, he knew that no plea would avail now, and he recognized that his reticence merited whatever punishment would be imposed upon him.

Joshua looked at him for a long time and mournfully, for he loved the young man. He had shown prowess and courage, ability and leadership, which had endeared him to the famous captain. He hesitated to pass sentence upon him,

and yet there was but one thing that he could say, but one punishment meet for the crime. The heap of stones that covered the remains of miserable Achan in the Valley of Achor not far away bore mute testimony to what that was. He could not condone the offense which was, in the stern, relentless view of that time, not only treason to the state but blasphemy against Jehovah! Yet he hesitated. Thrice he opened his mouth to speak, and thrice no words came.

"Let my voice," began Elidad, who had spoken before, "be lifted up in a plea for mercy before thou dost pronounce a sentence, O Joshua, thou son of Nun!"

"And mine also," pleaded Ahoah; "let my gray hairs and my long service move thee."

"If thou hast aught to say," said Joshua eagerly, "in behalf of this young man, speak on."

"Despite his youth he hath done our people much service," said Elidad softly; "I am old, but once I too was young. I have not forgot the passions of youth or the love of woman."

"This is no excuse, it is only an explanation."

"But there be two facts that we have all overlooked."

"And what are they?"

"One is that he tried to tell thee."

"And the other?"

"We are all of us at fault, son of Nun. We did not consult the Lord God Himself before we entered into this vain and foolish undertaking.

If we had inquired of Jehovah what to do and this youth had then witheld the information he would have been worthy of death, but now I think some lighter punishment might be meted out to him."

"Let him die," said Phinehas harshly.

"Have pity!" cried Ahoah, in answer to the fiery priest's bitter words.

"O Phinehas, thou son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, speakest thou so? Thou wert a priest of Jehovah. If we others forgot it should have been thine to recall us to our duty," answered Elidad sharply.

"From the lips of the son of Chislon, the Prince of Benjamin, fall words of wisdom," said Eleazar, the gentler High Priest, with reproof to his passionate son. "I pray thee give good heed to them, O Joshua!"

"Enough," said Joshua, glad of the way of the difficulty proposed to him by old Elidad, "thou speakest wisely and well, O High Priest of Jehovah! We are all at fault and need God's forgiveness in this matter. Worthy Prince of Benjamin, thou hast prevailed. And to thy plea for mercy, Ahoah, venerable councilor and friend, I gladly respond. This, then, is my sentence." He turned to Dodai, "To Canaan thou hast gone, to Canaan thou shalt go."

"My lord," exclaimed the young man piteously as he realized that this was a sentence of banishment, of exile, "make me not a stranger in my

father's house, an outcast from mine own people."

"Thou hast chosen," said Joshua inflexibly, "and I have spoken. Thy way lieth yonder."

He pointed toward the hills.

"And shall I never come back?"

"As God willeth," answered Joshua.

"And yet," interposed old Eleazar again, "is not Jehovah a God of mercy, long-suffering, full of lovingkindness, who spareth when we deserve punishment? If by chance the youth shouldst serve thee, O captain of the armies of Israel, and the chosen people of our God——"

"Perhaps," said Joshua briefly, but with meaning emphasis. "And now thou hast heard. Go."

A low wail again broke from the outskirts of the crowd, the heart-broken cry of a woman fell from the lips of Meriam, the wife of Ahoah, as she heard the dread sentence passed upon her first-born, the pride and joy of her old age. Tears glistened in the eyes of old Prince Ahoah himself as he left the Council and gathered his wife to his breast and strove to still her weeping, yet he was thankful for the mercy that had been shown Dodai, and he was not without hope that the youth might win back his place in Israel. He gazed long after the proud, erect figure of the young man as he passed through the crowd, which parted to give him way, and walked down one of the open streets between the groups of tents until he came to the confines of the camp, none saying to him a word even of farewell.

the camp, across the fields, and then up the Michmash road.

The lying ambassadors had a long start, and although they were old men they progressed rapidly and had got far, but the speedy messenger and the detachment of young men sent with him by Salmon in obedience to his orders finally overtook them and forced them to return. Outwardly they were indignant, protesting, unruly, but inwardly they were quaking with fear, for they knew, of course, the deception had been discovered. Old Shem-Hadad cursed Rahab, from whom he was certain the information had come, by all his gods, but he had to return with the others.

It was late in the afternoon before the embassy of Gibeon were hurried into the presence of Joshua. They had heard nothing at all of the reason of their detention from the messengers or the soldiers, but from the moment he had seen and recognized Rahab old Shem-Hadad had realized that discovery was certain, and he knew now that it had come. He resolved nevertheless to put a bold face upon it, and he therefore spoke out with the well-simulated indignation of a violated embassy, so soon as his eye fell upon the stern visage of the Hebrew surrounded as before by the great Council of Israel. He decided to avail himself of the advantage of the first blow if he could.

"What meaneth this outrage?" he cried in the

ominous silence in which they received him. "Having completed our embassy, having delivered our message and having entered into brotherhood and friendship with thee and thine, having eaten bread and salt together and taken oaths by our gods, we are pursued on our way, we are surrounded by thy soldiers, and rudely ordered to come back to thee. When we protested and refused to obey, they drove us back at the sword's point and all without a word of explanation of their actions."

"Art thou well advised to enter thy protest?" asked Joshua sternly.

"I am, by Baal, I swear it," answered the hoary-headed liar boldly.

"Blasphemer," said the Hebrew, "it was by mine order and at my will that thou wert so entreated."

"I demand of thee an explanation," persisted the Gibeonite.

"Know ye these men?" asked Joshua, pointing to the great group of Hebrews who stood with him.

"We know them," answered Shem-Hadad, "they are the princes of the tribes of Israel who vowed friendship and made alliance with us this morning. What hath changed ye?" he began, apparently for the first time observing the fierce indignation in the stares with which he was greeted. "Do your oaths have no potency? Last they but for a day?"

Many glances beside those of his father and mother and brethren and sisters were cast upon him. Many maidens looked approvingly at the handsome young man, who held his head so high, glancing neither to the right nor the left as he went away from his home, his family, and his people, with the almost contemptuous words of Joshua ringing in his ear. A long time that father and mother watched the rapidly moving figure until he had crossed the plain and was lost in the defiles of the mountain.

XII

HEWERS OF WOOD AND DRAWERS OF WATER

"WHAT is to be done now?" asked the impetuous Phinehas, breaking the silence that had fallen over the camp in the face of the heartrending tragedy they had all witnessed. "With regard to these strangers?"

"We have wasted time with this young man," said Joshua gloomily, suddenly awakening to the necessity of taking some action with regard to this now hated alliance into which they had so hastily and carelessly entered that morning. He turned to his guard. "Go, one of you," he said, "he that hath the fleetest foot, and stop these deceivers ere they escape out of our present reach. Bid Salmon dispatch a force to apprehend them and bring them back to me. He is to offer them no violence, do them no harm, but bring them back without fail."

After a moment's whispered consultation between the group of young soldiers, one detached himself from the others and laying aside his shield, spear, and cloak, and in fact stripping himself to the tunic and sword to make the better speed, ran with the fleetness of a deer through

"Thou hast deceived us?" cried Joshua.

"In what way?"

"Ye are Canaanites; that far country of which ye spoke is but on the other side of yonder mountain range."

It was out! This confirmation of his suspicions was, however, no surprise, and the ambassador was able to sustain the direct attack with certain firmness. He would indeed endeavor to brave it out still.

"Who hath deceived my lord in this?" he cried with well-simulated rage and with all the duplicity in his power.

"The woman Rahab."

"Thou dost take the word of a har——"

"Thou wilt do well," said Salmon fiercely, interposing between the two men with uplifted spear,—"thou wilt do well to stop before that word passeth thy lips. This woman is my honored wife."

Shem-Hadad grinned angrily, but in the face of the threatening attitude of the Judean spoke not.

"Peace, noble Salmon," said Joshua, laying his hand upon the arm of the angry man.

"Give me leave, my lord. What is the name of the far city of these people? I am but now from the outer camp, and I have heard nothing of all this."

"Gibeon," replied Joshua.

Salmon threw back his head and laughed.

"Why, it is scarce a half-day's journey from the ruins of Ai on the uplands yonder."

"Thou hearest?" thundered Joshua to Shem-Hadad.

"My lord," faltered the old man, grown suddenly weak and feeble.

"Why hast thou done this?" asked the leader.

"We had heard of thee," said the ambassador, and now he spoke with deprecating meekness, "how thou didst travel in the greatness of the strength of thy God. We saw how thou didst take Ai and Jericho, how they fell before thee, how the waters of the river parted as thou didst carry across that that thou callest the Ark of the Covenant. We feared for our lives. We would fain save our women, our children, our flocks, our herds, and so we dealt wilily with thee. We acknowledge all and throw ourselves upon thy mercy."

"Death!" cried someone with a great voice. "Death to the deceivers!"

"Death to the children of Baal!"

"Death to the liars!"

"Death to the idolaters!"

"Death to the forsworn!"

"Put them to the sword!"

"Offer them as a living sacrifice to our God!" burst in confused noises and shouts from the assembly.

"Sirs," cried Shem-Hadad shrilly, his frightened old voice rising above the noise and tumult,

"ye have sworn unto us by your God, ye have taken an oath to us. Ye surely cannot do this thing."

"No," said Eleazar gloomily, despite the furious protests of Phinehas and his zealous following. "We have sworn it. May Jehovah avert punishment from us for our weak folly, but we cannot be forsworn. The league we have made must be kept."

"The oath was entered into under false pretense," cried one of the soldier chiefs. "It ought not to be preserved."

It was Joshua who stilled the tumult.

"We have indeed sinned in the sight of the Lord God of Israel," he cried. "But these people are inviolate. We must keep our word. Silence, silence all," he continued; "if God punish us for our rashness, imprudence, and forgetfulness of Him, it is well; but He would certainly visit us with His wrath if we broke our oath. No, more," he added, "or those that lift their voices shall feel the weight of my hand." As the noise died away the Hebrew continued in a more moderate voice. "Shem-Hadad, thou hast triumphed; I and the people of Israel will observe the oath. We will not be forsworn. Thy city and those of thy confederation shall be spared; nevertheless, thou art cursed because thou hast deceived us. Thou hast secured an oath from us with a lie. Because of that, there shall none of ye be freed from being bondmen. Ye shall be made hewers of wood and

drawers of water for the house of our God and for the altar of the Lord forever. Thus thou shalt say unto thy people."

"Because," said Shem-Hadad, now thoroughly abashed by the majesty of the great captain, and desirous of exculpating himself in some degree at least, "it was certainly told thy servants how that the Lord thy God commanded His servant Moses to give ye all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before ye, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of ye and therefore have we done this thing. And now, behold we are in thine hand. As it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, so do," he concluded resignedly.

"Thou speakest well at last," said Joshua. "We will protect ye and when the time cometh and we visit ye, we will disclose unto ye our plans for ye. Now go. We like not to have ye in our camp."

With bowed head the Gibeonite, followed by his shamed companions, turned and went through the people again. This time they cursed him and execrated him, and none was so poor as to do him honor. The hearts of the Hivites were hot within them. They had indeed secured life for themselves and for their countrymen, but upon terms which made them practically servants and slaves to these strange people forever. Old Shem-Hadad, the fierce worshiper of Baal and Ishtar, especially raged at the thought that for the short

remainder of his life he was doomed to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the altars of that Jehovah whom he hated. And when he reflected upon his reception at Gibeon he quailed at the thought.

XIII

ONCE AGAIN TO BETH-ARAM

THE emotions that filled the breast of Dodai as he climbed again the great dry gorge in the bleak and arid mountains—for when he had reached the foothills his steps had instinctively turned to the rocky paths that he had traversed four months ago—were entirely different from those he had entertained on the night he had fled from Jericho. The cutting words of Joshua and the cold looks of the elders, the contemptuous bearing of the princes of the tribes, the menacing severity of the son of the High Priest who would fain have devoted him to death, the overpowering silence of the people through whom he passed, fairly overwhelmed him. Like all the Hebrews of that time, intensely religious, highly devout, possessed by a sense of the nearness of God which has scarcely been experienced by any other race at any other time, he felt keenly the sentence of alienation and exile that had been pronounced against him. And his resentment at his treatment oozed away with every passing moment. It was as if he had been not merely turned away from his home, his family, his friends, his people, but as if he were an outcast

from his God, as if he had been cut off from his religion.

He could have better sustained the awful shock of this situation were it not that he bore in his breast a consciousness that it was in a large measure deserved. Who was he that he should interfere with the plans of Jehovah by which the whole land was to be devoted to death for the idolatry and awful immorality of the people and for their many crimes! To be sure, Ephron the Hittite and Arinna his daughter had nothing in common with these people, yet they were frequent dwellers in Gibeon, and he scarcely doubted but that in the slaughter that would be meted out to all the inhabitants of the city should it be captured none would be spared.

The case of Rahab was an exception, truly, and it instituted no rule. It had not occurred to him until too late that in any event Jehovah could have insured the protection of His own. And that forgetfulness, too, seemed like a gross lack of faith in God which of itself merited the severest punishment. It certainly had not been necessary for Dodai to betray his people by keeping silent.

And yet if he had been quick, he might have affected his purpose without having appeared as conniving with the practices of the Gibeonites, for if he had frankly set forth to Joshua and the elders that Ephron the Hittite was a follower of Jehovah, an offer of alliance would have probably been made him, and he, Dodai, might

have been charged with the delivery of it. The Gibeonites would have gone their way to destruction; Arinna, converted to the faith of her father, would have been saved. Ultimately he could have won consent to marry her. He cursed himself for a fool as he plodded upward.

Well, it was too late now. There were two things that gave him a little comfort in his desperation. One was that hope that had been held out, indefinitely to be sure, that if he could render some conspicuous service to the Israelites he might thereafter be restored to his tribal, national, and religious privileges; and the other was that, however it had been brought about, he was going to meet this beautiful and adorable young Hittite woman whom he—he hesitated in his mind for a moment only, as the thought came to him in his misery and then he flung even self-deception to the winds—whom he loved beyond everything on earth. He had thought of her constantly during the period that had elapsed since their meeting, and had longed for the day when he should see her again; which day, however it had been brought about, was now at hand.

True, he had seen her but once, he had spent but one day in her society. As has been seen, Dodai had not wasted his opportunity. And although he could not know this, Ephron, a man of high character and wide learning, had conceived a great liking for the handsome and brilliant young man, and his gratitude for the great

service that Dodai had rendered to his daughter was boundless.

Other children had been denied Ephron, and he had lavished upon Arinna a care and devotion which had there been sons to his house she might not have received. The Hittite family of Zohar had gradually died out, and these two were all that were left thereof. The wealth, the probity, as well as the wisdom of Ephron secured for him a certain amount of consideration during that portion of his life which was spent in the city of Gibeon, but as the sole believer in Jehovah among the Hivites he was looked upon in many quarters with hatred and suspicion, especially so by the powerful priestly society. This had not prevented many suitors among the youth of the city from asking for the hand of Arinna, even as Prince Arami had done so unsuccessfully; but the maiden and her father alike had refused to entertain any of these matrimonial propositions whatsoever, for Ephron knew that Arinna had not yet learned to love. At least, that statement had been true four months ago, but since there flashed before the blue eyes of the maiden the tall, dark, splendid young man, the Prince of the Tribe of Benjamin, her heart had gone out to him in response to his quick and passionate wooing.

Arinna's chief confidant in this love affair was not her father, although he had divined the true state of affairs, but old Ilani, a Hittite woman of great age, who in her youth had been captured

and offered for sale as a slave. The father of Ephron had purchased her and because of her nationality had set her free and had given her honorable position in his household. She had been foster-mother to the present Ephron, and she afterwards filled the same position and function toward the daughter who had come to grace the old age of Ephron, and whose Hivite mother had died in giving her birth.

Since the two strange visitors had gone as they had come, no word had reached Arinna from the man who had saved her life and won her heart. But she rested confident in his honesty and in his devotion. She felt that he was equally incapable of forgetting her or of playing her false. In her lord's good time she would hear from him. So she waited, but with an ever-growing longing in her heart.

From the great peak, latterly called Quarantania, thrust out like a bastion from the mountain range, which was no great distance from the home of Ephron, the Hebrew camp could easily be seen. With old Ilani to bear her company and with the stoutest slaves and workmen for her guards, Arinna often wandered there. Sometimes Ephron had accompanied her. As it chanced, they had both been there when Jericho fell. They had seen the finale of that tremendous catastrophe. They had followed the doings of the Israelites thereafter with great and growing interest; they had heard of the repulse of the detachment before Ai.

They had been distant witnesses of the stoning of the disobedient Achan. They had seen far off against the northern horizon the smoke cloud hovering over the doomed city as it fell before the second attempt upon it. And then the Israelites, their Ark and their tabernacle, their tents and their belongings, their flocks and their herds, their wives and their children, had vanished over the mountains to the northward.

Where had they gone, they asked, as the dust of their movement settled away beneath the horizon? No more tidings came southward to them from the Hebrews for long, long weeks. Arinna used to watch from Quarantania the now deserted plain. One morning, to her great surprise, she found it again covered with moving figures. Whatever their purpose the Hebrews had effected it, they were returning. She watched them pitch camp at Gilgal. Was Dodai there? Had he perished in some of their battles? Why had he sent no word? The look in his eyes, the pressure of his hand, his kisses upon her lips, his words of promise, as he bade her farewell, were not merely casual. She could feel them after all these months of absence and silence, as she could feel that he was there in the valley and would soon come back to her. She rejoiced greatly in the sight of the camp and in the sense of his nearness.

Arinna looked with proud disdain upon the light, vain, dissolute Canaanitish women who

were her infrequent companions at Gibeon. She held herself aloof from them. She was a thing higher, a thing apart. She participated in none of their immoral revelries. She despised the pleasures they entered into under the sanction of their false and impure gods. Arinna was not yet a worshiper of a greater God than Baal and Ishtar, but her father's care and influence had not been exerted in vain. She was glad that Dodai had learned to regard her in her true light, not simply as one among the other women of the wicked, cruel land which it was whispered everywhere was to be seized by the Hebrews after the people had been rooted out and destroyed.

She would have given worlds for speech again with the young conqueror of her heart, for a look at him even. They were far-sighted and endowed with keen vision, these men and women of the past, but even Love itself could not identify a single figure out of the myriads that filled the camp at that distance from the hills. Arinna had been taught not only to read but to write the strange cumbersome characters of the country, but the thought of writing a message to Dodai never entered her head. She could only wait and watch and pray, and—without which all these were as ashes—hope. For one thing she wanted to warn him about Arami and his boastings and threatenings.

She was a busy maiden, too. Much of the ordering of the household work fell to her. Al-

though she was young the serving women and slaves came to her for such direction as they had formerly received from old Ilani, and it was well that she found some occupation for hands and brains in these trying hours. The whole country was in a most unsettled and apprehensive condition. The purpose of the Hebrews was divined. There had been a bewildering, appalling thoroughness about their work at Jericho and Ali. Walled cities usually impregnable against the armies of the nomad had fallen so promptly and so easily that the land was in a ferment of alarm. No wonder that the Jebusite king of Jerusalem, the most important of all the petty monarchs of the country, had engineered his confederacy and was making preparations to fling the whole force of the southern section upon Joshua's armed men in the hope that in one pitched battle he could drive the invaders from the country and back into the deserts whence they had come, before it would be too late.

It was because of this threat and peril that Ephron had been especially summoned to the Council at Gibeon, where he had given his good advice and had returned to his mountain aerie and to his daughter, where Arami had prosecuted his fruitless wooing. It was because of the deadly, paralyzing fear which had come down over the wicked land as a blight that the Gibeonites had forfeited their honor to their safety and used that stratagem which disgraced them forever

among their countrymen and their conquerors alike.

On the morning after the departure of the unsuccessful Arami, which was some days after the return of the Israelites to their camp at Gilgal, the duties of the early day having been completed and her maidens assigned to their various tasks, Arinna had gone down into the stretch of pasture-land that lay at the brink of the slope where she had before met the strangers. Warned by the experience of the months before, Ephron had caused the undergrowth to be thinned out considerably, and his stoutest slaves every morning beat up the coppices to make certain that no lurking lion or wolf or bear or other savage beast was hidden therein to prey upon man or flock or herd, so that Arinna ranged the little oasis with perfect fearlessness.

As was her frequent custom, her feet naturally bore her toward the mighty terebinth under which she had met Dodai months before and where their troth had been subsequently plighted. The ground sloped gently from the foot of the great gnarled old tree, whose twisted roots but partially covered by the thin soil offered natural resting-places like low thrones. When he had come upon her first she had been looking toward the house, now she chose a position where she could see over the valley and over the sea and river to the distant blue mountains of Moab. The spur of Quarantania hid the camp from her view. Where she

looked was another valley which she thought was as empty as her heart.

A long time she sat musing in that fashion in her favorite attitude, her little foot lifted against a stone, her elbow on her knee, and her chin in her hand. Although it was morning the day was hot. There was no breeze, the sky was cloudless. She had thrown aside the cloak she wore and sat bare-armed, clad in the graceful tunic. As she contemplated no mountain climbing, the shoes with the upturned points, an inheritance from her Hittite ancestors of centuries ago, had been discarded and upon her feet she wore the laced sandals of the country. The yellow strip of byssus girdled the tunic beneath her breasts under the Tyrian vest as before, the cap of silver had been laid aside. Her light brown hair braided in long plaits fell across her breast.

So she had been dressed when Dodai first saw her. She had many changes of raiment, as became the daughter of the rich sheik of Beth-Aram, but because these were identified with his visit, she loved them more than all the rest, and wore them most frequently, replacing them as they lost their dainty freshness with others as near like them as she could make or procure.

A long time she sat thus until the hush and quiet of midday fell over the landscape. The noon meal was making ready and the well-contented men and maidens engaged in various duties in the little fields trooped slowly up the paths

toward their quarters to break their long fast. They noted their mistress under the terebinth, and they cast devoted glances at her, for they loved her, but none disturbed her reverie.

The pleasant noise of their laughter, their footsteps, and their light talk soon died away. The sheep cropping the grass close about her made no sound and the cattle farther away nodded silently in the shelter of the olive trees overhanging the pool. The shadow of the tree told her that the sun at last had reached the midmost point in the heavens. It was time for her to go, too. Her father liked it not if she were absent when the bread was blessed and broken as the household gathered about its lord—a custom uninterrupted since the days of Abraham and that first Ephron his friend, and for how many thousands of years before none knew.

And yet some strange influence held her. Her eyes, which had swept the far country beyond, lowered, her glance fixed itself on the narrow ravine which gave entrance to the oasis from below and there, silently, suddenly, as if lifted up by some power of heaven or air, appeared the figure of a man. It was Dodai!

XIV

THE SOLACE OF EXILE

ARINNA recognized her lover instantly, of course. Her heart leaped in her breast at the sight of him. At last, after these months of weary waiting, he had come back. She rose to her feet and stretched out her hands to him. Color flamed into her cheeks, love-light brightened her eyes. He was there.

On his part, as if drawn by a magnet his glance so soon as he rose above the brink of the cliff sought the great terebinth where he had met her and he saw her clad in the same vesture, standing upon the same spot, waiting for him. For a moment in the great rush of joyous emotion he forgot everything but that she was there. But only for a moment. Over the joy of that meeting lowered the consciousness of his deep disgrace.

Without a word of greeting he turned, leaped to the wall, and came toward her. All her heart went out to him as he came. He had been weary before, he was weary now. No one could make that terrific ascent without taxing his energy and his manhood to the utmost. But she had not noticed his weariness before because the sight of her and her peril had started his pulses beating

and he had felt as refreshed in her presence as a giant awakened from slumber; now he moved slowly, with leaden feet and down-drooped head, almost as if reluctant.

His appearance frightened her a little. The heavy helmet of Egypt painted blue which he wore seemed burdensome.

There was about him none of the confidence and enthusiasm, none of the brilliance of his first appearance. His face was pale, and yet the pallor was not from exertion. Sweat bedewed his furrowed brow. His lips were unsmiling. He was without bow or shield; armed only with sword and spear, his other weapons had been laid aside while he waited on Joshua, and at his expulsion he had stopped for nothing.

The maiden had looked up to him as to a young god before. Now in her heart a wave of pity succeeded to her alarm as she marked his misery, nor was her love lessened by that emotion. She had often dreamed of that coming as had he. She knew by the passion that filled her heart that he would seize her in his arms. She wondered how much maidenly resistance she should offer, or whether she would lie there helpless and content, giving back his kisses as before. But she had never imagined this, nor had he. He had dreamed of appearing before her at the head of some conquering army, to extend to her a royal clemency, to raise up a woman suppliant and perhaps terrified in his arms and present her to

the world as his wife and to hold her inviolate against his heart. But things were not working out in that way for either of them. He stepped toward her. She bent forward and stared at him.

"Arinna," he said at last in a low tone.

"Dodai," she answered almost in a whisper.

"I have come back to thee."

"Unwillingly?"

"Nay, to see thee again has been the dearest wish of my heart. I love thee more than ever. I had hoped to seek thy father, to gain his permission to make thee my wife, a princess of my tribe, but now——"

"But now——"

"I am a broken man, an exile, driven from the camp, cut off, cast away. Death itself would be preferable."

"What hast thou done?" asked the maiden, rising and stepping closer to him. "But stay, before thou dost answer me, let me put to thee another question." She looked at him with a strange fearlessness. "Thou saidest a moment since that thou hadst not ceased to love me, that it had been thy purpose to ask thy father to give me to be thy wife. Art thou still in the same mind this morning?"

"Can I offer thee the love of an outcast, a disgraced and broken man?" asked Dodai bitterly, lifting his head. "Nay, I love thee too much for that."

"Thou hast answered me," said the maiden, smiling. She laid her hand fearlessly upon the shoulder of the young man, who stood a little below her on the slope of the ground so that their eyes were level. "Hear me; I asked thee what thou hadst done. Before thou dost tell me I make confession. I love thee. I have not changed, I have loved thee ever since thou didst stand before me here, beneath this very tree, thy sword red with the blood of the lion thou hadst slain. I love thee with every drop of blood of the life that thou didst save. I do not take back my heart. I know not what thou hast done or why this misfortune hath come upon thee, but it mattereth little to me. I trust thee as I love thee. If thou art cast off by thy family, thy tribe, thy nation, thou wilt find welcome here, for I am thine and my father will be to thee as a father and thou wilt be to him as a son, when thou hast made me thy wife. Thou hast taken me in thine arms. Thy lips have met mine. I am thine. Dost understand?"

"Arinna," cried the young man, his face lighting, "with thy sweet self thou givest me life, hope, God, again."

"These be great things to come with so slight a maiden," said the woman, smiling at him, and the next moment Dodai caught her slender figure in his arms for the second time.

This, at least, was like the dreams in which they had both indulged. They loved each other still,

they confessed it again with the simplicity of primitive peoples and the frankness of the far East. Since they had avowed their love once more her sweetly tremulous lips did not shrink or turn away from his own firmer ones. She gave him kiss for kiss there in the oasis amid those great rocks with the greensward stretching away at her feet shadowed by the foliage of the terebinth with the blue sky and the gold sun arching over all.

By and by he released her a little, but reluctantly, and she drew away a little, but with regret.

"Thou hast asked me what I have done. It is a sorry tale and my only justification is that in a measure it concerneth thee."

"If my lord chooseth to tell me, well and good," said the girl. "If not, I am satisfied to know nothing more save that it hath brought thee to mine arms again after all these weary months of waiting."

"Thou must be told," said Dodai earnestly.

"It would perhaps, I think," said a deeper voice behind the lovers, "be as well that some immediate explanation be made of this situation and of thy presence, O thou Dodai, son of Ahoah."

The two lovers separated instantly.

"Ephron!" exclaimed one.

"My father!" cried the other.

The old Hittite, coming himself to see why his daughter had not returned for the midday meal,

had chanced upon them; and, wrapped in their own thoughts and in each other, they had not noted his coming until he broke his silence. He looked at them sternly enough, yet there was a light in his eyes which would have shown to persons less blind and confused than these two that beneath his sternness there was a certain satisfaction. Accustomed to estimate men, he had seen the worth of Dodai, and from secret inquiries he had learned something of his position in the Tribe of Benjamin. There was no one to whom he could more safely intrust his daughter, but that was not to be revealed for the present.

It was Dodai who recovered himself first.

"Venerable Ephron," he said in deep humiliation at being compelled to make the avowal, "I am a broken man, yet one not without hope. Thy daughter Arinna hath given me back my confidence in myself. I am an outcast from my father's house and from my people, but a chance of restoration still remaineth. I love thy daughter, I have loved her from the first moment I saw her standing here under the shade of the tree. I had hoped to offer her my hand at the head of the soldiers of my tribe, but such as I am, I am thine as I am hers."

"My father," said Arinna, "chide me not. Although thou mayst think I have been unmaidenly, I love Dodai, son of Ahoah, and with thy permission I would fain be his wife."

"And what hath Dodai, son of Ahoah, done that

he should be an outcast, landless, without goods, more fit for servitude than to sue for the hand of the only daughter of the Prince of Beth-Aram?"

Rapidly, sparing himself nothing, and delicately striving not to emphasize that it was the thought of the possible danger to the lives of Ephron and Arinna that had caused him to be silent, Dodai told his story.

"Thy great leader and lawgiver could do no less than to send thee away," said Ephron gravely, as the young man's tale was finished. "Indeed, he showed mercy upon thee, yet I blame thee not save in this. Thou couldst have declared unto Joshua and the elders that I, the Prince of Beth-Aram, am a worshiper of the true God, Jehovah; that my people were friends with thy people in days long past; that I am not of the city of Gibeon save in the winter and when roving marauders render it necessary that I seek shelter for myself, my daughter, my people. By so doing, thou couldst have saved us and have left the Gibeonites to the fate they deserved."

"Had I thy wisdom, O Ephron, I had done so, and indeed it occurred to me afterward as I climbed the mountain, instinctively turning hither, since I knew not where else to go; but at the moment," the young man burst out passionately, "I thought only of thy daughter, who doth not yet believe in Jehovah, and of thee. I thought of the fierce onrush of the fighting men, their hearts

inflamed with battle, with their orders to strike to kill; I saw Arinna dead, and thou, and as I loved her I kept silence."

"My lord, I do believe," cried Arinna swiftly. "I have thought much, and though I affected not to listen to my father he hath persuaded me. I but awaited thy coming to tell thee I renounce Baal and Ishtar. Thy God is my God, O Dodai, thou master of my heart!"

"I should be the last to blame thee, Prince of Benjamin," said Ephron kindly, deeply affected also by his daughter's confession. "Shem-Hadad and his followers will be in Gibeon to-night and on the fifth day, which will be the day after to-morrow, Adoni-Zedec will send for his answer. The Gibeonites will decline the proffered alliance. I know the fierce Jebusite. He will strike and strike hard and swiftly. Armies are even now gathering about Jerusalem. Joshua and his people will have a chance to meet foemen worthy of their steel, and this time not sheltered by walls of cities but in the open field. Surely opportunity for service shall come to thee, and thou shalt earn thy restoration."

"May Jehovah grant it!"

"Whether it be so or not, thou art welcome to the house and lands of Ephron, the Hittite"—he stopped, smiled, looking at the young man; then he turned to Arinna, his face tender with emotion—"and to the arms of his daughter," he added softly.

The two needed no further suggestion to meet deed with word.

"Thou shalt take her to wife, but not to-day nor to-morrow. When these troubles are over, when the war is finished and the country is settled, we shall see. Meantime, I myself will go to the Hebrew camp——"

"To plead for me?"

"Nay, to establish friendship with Joshua. Thou must let thy deeds plead for thee."

"And so they shall!" cried Dodai.

"My lord will win back his fame as he hath won me, at the sword's point," said Arinna.

"I hope so," said the sheik encouragingly. "Meanwhile the youths and maidens, the old men and women, the boys and girls are gathered together for the noonday meal. They wait our arrival. My son, give me thine arm."

It was at the noon meal that Dodai, much encouraged by his greeting and reception by Ephron, learned of the unsuccessful wooing of Arami. His dark face flushed at the sound of that name, which he had not forgot. As for threat the Canaanite had made against him, he laughed it to scorn and declared his longing to meet him in the high places of the field.

XV

THE DEFIANCE TO THE FIVE KINGS

LATE that afternoon Ephron, accompanied most unwillingly by Dodai, left the oasis of Beth-Aram. It was Ephron's purpose to repair to the camp of Joshua. The shortest way was, of course, straight down the mountains, but there was no real road and scarcely any practicable path that way, and the gorge which led to the oasis was practically impassable for a man of his years. Therefore he decided to ascend to the plateau to the northward and to descend to the valley by the practicable way that led past the ruins of Ai and Michmash. He decided to spend the night at Gibeon first, because he was curious to know how the citizens received the report of their envoys and what answer they would make to the messenger of Adoni-Zedec.

He did not care to leave Dodai with his daughter. Although Nadab, his chief steward, and old Ilani were entirely to be trusted, it did not comport with his ideas of propriety that the young lovers should be left alone. Hence his insistence that the young Benjamite accompany him as far as Gibeon.

Also he had another purpose in view in taking Dodai with him. He knew, of course, that the

alliance between Gibeon and the other Hivite cities and the Hebrews could not be kept a secret for very long, and although he was not a soldier himself he realized that a knowledge of the real state of affairs in the city by a soldier like Dodai might enable him to be of great service in the campaign that was sure to follow. Naturally he wanted Dodai to have the benefit of every advantage that he could give him in his effort to restore himself in the mind of Joshua and the elders, and to regain his rightful place among the people. Ephron was a proud man, and he would very much prefer to have his daughter wedded to a Prince of the house of Benjamin than to an outlaw and an exile, however worthy he might be. Consequently, he separated the two lovers, much against their wills by the way, and only upon the promise that the next day or the day after at most, Dodai might return for another visit to the oasis where he had found his happiness.

This was the first time that Dodai had penetrated further than the house into the little domain of Beth-Aram. The valley narrowed to the westward, the mountains rose precipitously on either side, and finally an entrance to the upland or plateau was afforded by a narrow rift or gorge. Across this opening Ephron had built a rude wall, more to contain his cattle and sheep than for any other purpose but which, nevertheless, afforded a very good defense. One face of the cliff overhung the wall and protected defenders from at-

tack above. With the eye of a natural soldier Dodai marked the possibilities of the situation and pointed them out to Ephron.

"Yes," said the latter. "We did not build the wall for that at first, but it hath served me well on occasion and my father also. When the Egyptian or Assyrian hath harried the country, or even when masterless and thieving Canaanites have raided the mountains, this hath been a barrier which hath never been surmounted. My father hath told me how he also held it against assault, but in my day, save for bands of robbers who did not venture to attack so strong a place as Beth-Aram with its many men, we have not been molested."

"If thou wilt permit a young man to give advice to one so wise as thou art——" said Dodai modestly.

"Speak on, my son."

"—the gate is old and the wood decayed," he thrust his thumb into it to show its softness; "this is the weak spot in thy wall. Wars are certain to come; my people mean to subdue this land. It would be well to have the gate built anew of the stoutest stuff."

"Thou speakest wisely," said Ephron admiringly. "When thou dost return to Beth-Aram the day after to-morrow, give orders in my name that it be done."

"Would it not be well to turn back now and leave the order?" ventured the young man.

"Thou art unduly apprehensive," said Ephron easily. "When thou dost return will be time. Come, we have delayed too long already."

The house was plainly visible from the rift in the mountains through which they passed. There upon the flat roof which was shaded by awnings and made a pleasant resting-place for the family stood a single figure. The gentle breeze of the afternoon blew the draperies about the slender form. Dodai recognized who it was. He stopped at the entrance, lifted his hand carrying the spear and shook it in greeting, and so passed out of the sight of Arinna. He had left her in much the same way by the mountain gorge months before, but it was a happy, joyous Arinna who waved him farewell this time, and not a sad one.

The gates of Gibeon were tightly closed when the two reached the place, but Ephron was well known within the town, and the guard made no difficulty in admitting them. The Hittite had cautioned Dodai to say nothing about his disgrace. With Oriental cunning he was willing to let it appear that he brought a prince of the Hebrews in good standing to Gibeon, although he was careful to declare that Dodai came in an unofficial capacity, that he was simply a visitor at Beth-Aram whom he had brought to Gibeon to show him the strength and the worth and the position of the city.

Gibeon stood on a hill raised above the plateau, which was generally rocky, hilly, arid, and deso-

late beyond description. The road was a mere apology for a highway. It was not practicable for war chariots or wheeled vehicles, and a horse would have been more or less useless. Only the hardy asses of the mountains could be employed to carry burdens with any success. Dodai rather rejoiced at this, for the Israelites were not horsemen or charioteers. Even Joshua himself fought afoot like the humblest soldier in the ranks.

Gibeon was surrounded by an oasis caused by a perennial spring whose water, abundant in quantity and sweet and cool, was famous throughout the whole country. It was used freely by the citizens to irrigate gardens and groves without the walls and finally fell into a huge pool sixty-five paces long and half as many broad. It had never been known to fail, and the water supply gave the city its importance. In the rainy season a considerable lake formed in the valley. It was now mostly dried up, it being midsummer, but there were trees and ripened fields of grain there.

From the heights above Gibeon the observer could look over the hills with which he was surrounded, south about half a day's journey by the road to Jerusalem, while a little to the eastward of north and the same distance away, hard by the ruins of Ai, lay Beeroth, the farthest town of the Hivite Confederacy. Slightly to the northward of west and about the same distance away, the two passes of Beth-Horon, upper and lower, ran through rifts in the mountains down to the

Maritime plain below. Roads such as they were led from Gibeon to Beeroth, Jerusalem and down through the passes of Beth-Horon to the fertile lowlands. Although at a distance of some six miles, as the crow flies, from the pass, Gibeon really commanded it. No invader could safely make use of the pass unless he held the city.

For the rest, though it was small compared to the great cities of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Hittite empire to the north, yet Gibeon was a place of size and importance, larger and stronger than Jericho. Its walls were built of the limestone of the terrain and were thick and high, protected by towers and crested with battlements. Like most fortified Eastern cities it covered a very small expanse of territory for its population, and it abounded with narrow streets and alleys. Much of its people lived outside of the walls in the oasis on the hillside, some of them in stone houses, others in temporary tents and shelters of the flimsiest description.

Ephron and Dodai noticed, as they passed through these suburbs, that they were mainly deserted, and when they entered the city they found that it was crowded with people in a state of great excitement. Shem-Hadad had returned a few hours before. He had made his report to the Mālik and his council. The news had in some way leaked out from the council chamber, and the people were filled with indignation.

It would have gone hard with the shrewd if

unscrupulous old councilor had he shown himself in the streets then, but he knew enough to keep in the house and he was wise enough to realize that he had done the very best thing possible for his people. True, the Israelites had no machinery for carrying on a siege, but they could reduce the town by starvation and they could deprive it of its water supply with most direful results. What he had seen of Joshua and the Hebrews—and he had kept his old eyes, which were much keener than they appeared, widely open while in the camp at Gilgal—convinced him that he had done the only thing that would insure the safety of his people. He felt that these Hebrews were destined to conquer the land, and he had a superstitious feeling that their God in the final issue would prove Himself vastly superior to Baal, yes to Baal and Ishtar and the whole Assyrian host of heavenly deities.

Making their way through the crowded streets with some difficulty, Ephron and Dodai, at whom many curious glances were cast, arrived at last at the house of the former. It did not seem wise to Ephron to announce the nationality of his companion during the heated and excited period. He would wait until the morning before he brought him to the Mālik and the councilors, and with them he would leave him while he went his way to the camp at Gilgal. Dodai for one was intensely weary, and he welcomed the undisturbed rest of the night.

The excitement had largely subsided in the morning, and Ephron found it not difficult to establish Dodai in the good graces of the ruler of the confederacy and the chief men of the city before he departed for the camp of Joshua. Indeed, they greeted him with distinct consideration. Anxious to let this first representative of the Hebrews whom they had seen know that Joshua and the princes had made no bad bargain, they showed him everything. They mustered their troops for his inspection, they pointed out the strength of their position, and were not careful even to conceal its weakness, which was the water supply. The spring broke from the rocks outside the wall, and no one had ever thought to inclose and protect it by the same massive bulwarks which covered the town.

Anxious also to please this representative of their coming overlords, they pressed upon him rich presents, offered him the choice of all they possessed, and when Dodai would fain have refused and did in fact refuse garments, articles of gold and silver, they bade him choose for himself.

Soldier-like, he selected a handsome tunic of Babylonian armor. The tunic was of soft leather of a variety with which he was not familiar and was overlaid with many links of steel. As he had come armed only with a sword and spear, he took from the armory a Hittite bow, short but of great strength, and from a vast number selected with

the skill and precision of a tried archer enough arrows to fill the quiver that went with the bow. The old Mālik pressed upon him a round target or shield of bronze mounted with silver, to which at his request they fixed a thin golden image of a wolf, his tribal cognizance. They wanted to give him also a round Babylonian helmet, but he preferred that helmet of Egypt, painted blue with the silver serpent twined about it, which his father had taken from the head of a dead chief on the shore the day the Egyptians were overwhelmed by the waters of the Red Sea. He took also a curious knife of copper, a Hittite weapon they told him, which he thrust into his belt on the side opposite to his sword.

He looked long and earnestly at an axe for battle, but at last laid it aside. The weight of what he had was considerable, and he did not want to sacrifice his possible mobility by adding any unnecessary burden to his equipment, so that his weapons finally consisted of sword, dagger, spear, and bow, and his defensive armor of leather tunic reinforced with steel, target of bronze, and that Egyptian helmet painted blue. Altogether he made a splendid and imposing figure. There were no mirrors, of course, but with pardonable vanity Dodai felt rather pleased with himself and his thoughts flew back to Beth-Aram and he wished that Arinna could see him now.

These pleasant duties and privileges whiled away the morning. After partaking of the noon-

day meal and the invariable siesta that followed at the house of Abd-milki himself, the chief councilor was apprized of the return of the messenger of Adoni-Zedec for his answer. In the council chamber, Dodai in his armor stationed himself in the rear of the chief councilor. He heard the haughty, warlike demand of Arami, the splendid ambassador of the Jebusite king. Confident of the support of the Hebrews, and the presence of Dodai himself made him the more certain of it, the old Mālik spiritedly flung back the haughtiness of the Canaanite soldier and disdainfully refused the proffered alliance.

"Knowest thou," cried the prince, his dark face flushing with surprise and indignation, "that this meaneth war?"

"We know it."

"Look well to your bulwarks," said the Jebusite captain, instantly and with terrifying emphasis, "for on the morrow the forces of the five great kings will be at your gates, and after we have left not one stone upon another of Gibeon we shall deal with these invaders in the same way. I would," he added in thunder tones that filled the hall, "that one of them were present to hear my words."

"By thy leave, noble councilor," interposed Dodai, stepping forward, "one is here. Thou art that Arami I hate above all men."

"And wherefore I in particular, slave?" asked the soldier contemptuously.

"I am Dodai. I have sworn to kill thee," was the enlightening answer.

With his hand upon his sword hilt he confronted the insolent Canaanitish captain with a figure as erect and as undaunted as that of the envoy.

"And I too have made a like oath!" exclaimed the other passionately, as he heard that hated name. "I see now," he went on, turning to the Mālik, "why ye have rejected this proffered alliance. Ye have made agreement with the invaders, ye traitors in the land."

"And if we have?"

"Ye shalt be ground like wheat between the upper and the nether millstone. Either we will blot you out, or they will make you their slaves. Well, unless they move quickly and strike hard, they will find nothing here but ruined walls and dead men. By Baal, I swear! I go."

"Wouldst fight with me here and now," cried Dodai, as the messenger turned on his heel, "and let our gods decide between us?"

"Gladly," instantly returned Arami, who was a man of great courage evidently, laying his hand on his sword and stepping toward the Hebrew.

"Nay," interposed the chief councilor harshly, "as ambassador he came and as such he must go. His person is sacred by all the gods. Restrain thyself, O brave Prince of the Hebrews, and do thou, Arami, betake thyself hence unhindered."

"We shall meet," said the Jebusite with threatening gesture and mien, "on the field if thou art here when we return and thy spirit doth not fail thee."

"It shall not," answered Dodai with equal pride and resolution.

"I hope not, and now as this is war, I say no word of farewell to the elders of Gibeon," returned Arami.

He gathered his cloak about him and stalked haughtily and disdainfully from the room, attended by his escort and ushered out by the servants of the Mālik. Silence filled the assemblage on his departure. Men looked to their fellows and drew their breath softly. Expressions of alarm appeared on different faces.

"Now, by Baal, methinks we had done better to have allied ourselves with our own blood," cried the priest; "that false deity of Ephron hath misled——"

"Silence!" said the Mālik, stopping priest and Israelite, who were confronting each other with hostile heart and angry looks. "Hebrew Dodai, son of Ahoah, thou hast heard the words of Arami of Jerusalem?"

"I have heard."

"Gibeon is but a single city. Five of the strongest and most powerful cities of the south are leagued against us under the great Adoni-Zedec of Jerusalem, the ablest and most influential of them all. Dost understand?"

"I understand."

"Any of these cities can put a force of fighting men in the field far outnumbering our own, and against the five of them we can by no means stand, not even with the united forces of our confederation."

"But thy walls and towers, which I have marked well?"

"They have means to batter them down and to undermine them. We must have help from thy people, and that instantly or we are undone," said the Mālik earnestly.

"I see."

"Thinkest thou that they will keep their oath?"

"I know that they will."

"Art sure?"

"They have sworn by Jehovah, the Most High God. That is an oath that they cannot break, lest the vengeance of God consume them."

"To the statement of the noble youth I fully agree," said Shem-Hadad softly. "Whatever they mean to do to us, they will not see us spoiled by our enemies."

"Well then," said the Mālik, greatly relieved, "messengers must be dispatched to the lord Joshua bidding him come to our aid. It is night. They can go now, and they should reach the camp at Gilgal in the morning. Adoni-Zedec will not move before dawn, and we can hold him off until the Hebrews come to our succor."

"I will go," said Dodai promptly, forgetful for

the moment that he was a proscribed man and might not be welcome.

"Nay," said the Mālik, "bide thou here. This is the post of danger, and we need thee. Thy presence putteth heart into the people. There are other messengers." He turned to his secretary. "Hast thou parchments?"

"Lord, I have."

"Give them to me."

Amid a breathless silence the old man sat down at a sort of a table which was placed before him, spread out the parchments, and, using the peculiarly formed writing of Babylon, slowly indited a brief but weighty message upon a fair piece of sheepskin.

"Can thy people read this writing, thinkest thou?"

"I cannot," answered Dodai, after a glance at the queer wedge-shaped marks upon the leather, "but there are those in the camp who can. The learned Joshua himself hath great skill in such matters."

"It is well," answered the Mālik. He handed the parchments, which he first sealed with the seal of the city to Irkanati, the chief captain, who stood in attendance. "Dispatch trusty messengers to Joshua with this writing at once. Let them go up by the way of Ai and the Michmash road, and let them proceed with all speed. Send other messengers to the other cities of our association at the same time and bid them prepare for war. Arouse

the soldiers, double the guard, summon the dwellers without to come within the walls, and make every preparation for defense. The council is over. Shem-Hadad and thou, good youth, I would have further speech with ye. Do ye attend me."

XVI

THE MESSENGERS OF APPEAL

THERE was little sleep in Gibeon that night. The direful news that Adoni-Zedec had declared war against them and would fall upon them immediately was spread abroad instantly. In the long period of comparative peace that the land had enjoyed, which was now about to close, with the improvidence of the fatalistic Orient, neglect and indifference had taken the place of watchfulness and care. Consequently, there was work for everybody to strengthen the defense. And as war was a life-and-death matter for everybody in those days, even for non-combatants so called, the people high and low, old and young, labored with a will.

In the morning watchers on the walls heard the sound of trumpets in the hills to the southward, and presently the valley below the city was filled with men. They halted some distance away just out of bowshot, and one figure in magnificent armor and vesture, but weaponless with arms uplifted indicating that he desired speech, rode forward and halted. Old Irkanati, the chief captain of Gibeon, mounted the wall over one of the gates and beckoned him to come nearer. Back of

him a short distance followed a little group of men, also unarmed, each bearing a small sack. When the newcomer was in hailing distance, the chief captain bade him stop and approach no nearer.

"I would have speech with the chief captain of the city," cried the officer.

He was none other than Japhia, the king of Lachish, who had been appointed to lead the advance and invest Gibeon after Arami had reported to Adoni-Zedec the night before. With wise and soldier-like decision the confederated monarchs decided to force the fighting and strike at Gibeon at once. They would thus discourage any further possible defections to, or alliance with, these formidable Hebrews.

"I am he," answered Irkanati.

"My royal brethren offer Gibeon and its people a last chance."

"What is that?"

"Open ye your gates and submit youselves to us without further delay and your lives shall be spared."

There was a moment of hesitation. The chief captain turned and spoke to Abd-milki, the Mālik, who had come thither with the other councilors, but were hidden by the parapet walls.

"Thine answer," roared the king with regal impatience.

"No!" cried Irkanati resolutely.

"Think ye that ye shall have aid from the

Hebrew dogs?" he shouted in wrath; and then, not waiting for an answer, he beckoned to the men with the bags, out of which each man accordingly lifted a severed human head! "Know ye these?" he asked in scorn and triumph.

A shout of rage broke from the lips of the old chief captain of the city. The walls of Gibeon were suddenly black with soldiers, shrieking and yelling with anger and horror, for everyone had recognized the heads. They were those of the half-dozen soldiers who had been dispatched the night before with messages to Joshua. Not one of them had escaped!

"Thou seest that the city is here," cried the chief captain defiantly. "If ye be able, seize the gates and open them yourselves, and we will die behind the walls."

Japhia, the Lachishite, was a wise soldier as well as brave. He had taken advantage of the night to station a detachment of his escort in the ravine to the northward of the city through which the road ran. He had anticipated that some such effort would be made to send word to the Hebrews, and the unsuspecting messengers had blundered into the trap he had prepared for them and had been slain to a man. He now withdrew from the parley and began the rearrangement of his troops, which had been reinforced that morning, so as completely to contain the city upon which no assault was then launched. The main body would be up before night and the rude siege

artillery and other machinery for the taking of cities would then be available.

Behind the jagged points of the great range of mountains to the eastward lay the only chance of succor for Gibeon, the army of the Hebrews, and no word had reached them! Things looked dark indeed for the Hivites. Were they to be left alone to bear the brunt of the attack which must soon follow? What was to be done? How was word to be sent to Joshua now?

That was the anxious question that agitated the breasts of the councilors during the morning. It was Dodai who solved it.

"Sirs," he said, "I will go myself."

"But how?" asked the Mālik. "The soldiers who killed our messengers of last night are still there. The main body of the Canaanite army will soon approach from the southward."—They had drawn no nearer since the repulsion of the king and it was evident that the main force had not yet come up.—"There are but two ways to thine Hebrew camp and they are both covered. The city is completely invested."

"There is still another way," answered Dodai. "I know it, for I have traversed it twice."

"What way is that?"

"Straight down the mountain range from the oasis of Beth-Aram."

"The home of Ephron the Hittite?"

"Even so. Give me two of the swiftest and strongest and bravest men of thine army, and we

will bear the message to Joshua. But thou shouldst make haste," he continued, "for the city will be so surrounded before the night fall that scarce even a bird could fly away from it."

"How wilt thou go?" asked the aged Mālik anxiously.

"There are ravines that cross this rugged upland of thine. In their cover we will gain the edge of the hills and in their shelter proceed to the southward until we come to the oasis. Thereafter the journey is easy, comparatively speaking."

"But if thou shouldst be seen and pursued?"

"There will be three of us, and one may, nay one must, escape. I am fleet of foot. See that my companions be likewise."

"But if ye should be overtaken?"

"God," said the young man, "will protect His own."

"Thou shalt go," answered the Mālik, greatly relieved. "Let me write again."

"If I reach the Hebrew camp there will be no need of writing, but if I should fall and the carrying of the message be devolved upon one of those that accompany me, it would be well that he have a parchment. Give to each of us a copy."

"That is well thought on," said the Mālik approvingly.

He turned again to his secretary and laboriously indited a brief message in the usual cuneiform writing, which he copied twice with his own hand, signed, and sealed; and having thus finished

them he directed an attendant to inclose each of them in a bag of leather, while he sent another to summon Irkanati. When that veteran soldier presented himself he asked him:

"What of the enemy?"

"They lie quiet behind the ridge a little distance to the south of us."

"They have not drawn nearer?"

"Not yet. A few watchers are on the summit of the ridge, the rest have retired behind it."

"What thinkest thou?"

"It is the advance guard of the Canaanitish army. They have come to watch us, to threaten us, to contain us, until the main force be assembled."

"Wilt thou send me hither two of the fleetest and bravest men in thy command to accompany this noble Hebrew to the camp with messages? It is a dangerous service. Because of the likelihood that they may lose their lives in the attempt, let them offer willingly."

"We have a thousand young men who would gladly make the attempt with this brave Hebrew. I will send thee two of the best."

"Will my lord give me leave?" asked Dodai suddenly.

"Speak," said the Mālik.

"It will be difficult enough for us to get away unobserved. If the chief captain here would lead some of that brave thousand of which he speaketh out of the city gates and offer battle to the enemy

and occupy them, we might the more easily and surely escape."

"Give me leave, noble councilor," said Irkanati.

"Speak thou."

"The youth hath spoken well and like a soldier. Have I thy permission to do as he hath suggested? It will teach these haughty Canaanites a lesson."

The old Mālik reflected.

"Our forces are few. We cannot afford to lose many. Let it be only a demonstration, a feint rather than an attack pressed home. Retreat when they advance upon thee."

"I understand. Have I thy permission, O noble Abd-milki?"

"Thou hast it. Pray commend me to thy noble master," continued the Mālik, turning to Dodai. "I long to see so great a soldier."

"I shall do so."

"And success to thine adventure."

In a few moments Dodai, in complete armor, met the two young Hivites who awaited him in the courtyard. He looked at them approvingly. They were tall, alert, sinewy young men, built not only for speed but for strength as well. They were armed as he, but with not quite such splendid war gear and they wore round Babylonian caps of steel rather than the Egyptian helmet painted blue.

"I," said the first, "am called Giammu."

"And my name," said the second, "is Lalli. We are to go with thee."

"Here is the message, one for each of you, O Lalli and Giammu," said the Mālik, who had accompanied Dodai. The messages were inclosed in bags, and each one was provided with a thong of leather by which it could be hung about the neck of the bearer under the armored tunic. "Thou shalt give these into the hands of Joshua, Prince of Israel, if either of ye have the fortune to survive. For the rest, thou, Giammu, and thou, Lalli, are under the order of Dodai. We who are left here will pray for your success. The fate of Gibeon, of her old men and her women, of her youths and maidens, her little children, her altars and her gods is with ye."

"Jehovah guard us," said Dodai.

"Thou wilt offer sacrifices to Baal in our behalf," said Giammu, the elder of the two young men.

"I will. Go."

"There is a gate," said Dodai, as the three went out into the streets, "which openeth to the eastward as I remember."

"There is, lord."

"Lead us there."

"At thy command."

As the three men made their way through the crowded streets they heard the noise of trampling of many feet, the jingle of armor and equipment.

"What is that?" asked Dodai, pausing and looking up a cross street toward the main street of the city.

"It is the band of the chief captain going out to engage the Canaanites," answered Lalli.

"It is well. When the battle is joined we will make our dash for the hills."

"Ah, that is thy plan," said the elder of the two Gibeonites. "That is well devised, lord."

Presently the three messengers reached the gate. The elder of the two Gibeonites gave the word, the gates were opened, and they passed through. The north and south way passed close by this gate. Fortunately it made a sudden bend eastward for a short distance and dropped down, just where it turned north beneath walls of rock. It ran through a little ravine, in fact, the walls of which were high enough to conceal a stooping man. The ravine deepened as it left the road and plunged westward and finally lost itself in the rocky hills.

The three men waited within the recess formed in the walls by the gate. They heard the blare of the trumpets as the thousand men, led by Irkanati in person, marched through the south gate and formed an irregular line upon the hill.

"If he would keep quiet those trumpets," said Dodai severely, "he would have a better chance to surprise them."

The trees about the hills as yet concealed the movements of the sallying party from the Canaanite sentries. Yet the noise of the trumpets attracted their attention at once. The three watchers could see them suddenly quicken into

attention and stare eagerly and intently toward the city. The same idea that came to Dodai had perhaps at last come to the chief captain, for there was no more trumpeting. The men of his command dashed rapidly through the trees, passed the country houses, and deployed in the open valley.

The Canaanites were taken by surprise, but not entirely so. Sentries shouted and blew their trumpets. Instantly the ridge was black with men, who at once began forming to meet the sortie. But the sally was made with great spirit and courage and with great skill as well. Before the Canaanites had time to order their ranks and advance, the Gibeonites were among them, thrusting with their spears, cutting with their swords, while parties of bowmen on either flank stopped a little distance away and began to pour arrows upon the Canaanites.

The ridge was the scene of a fierce and sharp battle. At first the advantage was entirely with the Gibeonites, but even the advance guard of the Canaanites outnumbered the sallying party five to one. There were proved and trained soldiers in that command under King Japhia, a host himself, and they rushed up and down the lines raging like lions. The first impulse of panic was checked. The men were re-formed under fire. The bowmen of the Canaanites were thrown out on the flanks to counter the other archers. The king advanced to the front, freely exposing himself to hearten

his men, who quickly rallied and presently moved forward.

The chief captain, however, had been given his orders. Just as the Canaanite advance began, he gave a prearranged signal and his men turned and came back on the dead run. The bowmen on either flank, pouring in a perfect hail of arrows, checked the advance of the enemy for a moment and then they too joined their fleeing comrades. The Canaanites pursued the Gibeonites to the edge of the oasis, but they dared go no further. The chief captain had inflicted considerable loss, having sacrificed but few of his command.

It was a gallant sortie and well delivered, and it had served its purpose, for in the very height of the engagement the three messengers had dashed down the road and had gained the shelter of the ravine unobserved. The distance between Gibeon and Beth-Aram could have been traversed in a few hours by an alert man, but in this instance the three had to go very slowly. It was necessary to take advantage of every hill and valley, of every ravine, of every rocky cover; they had to reconnoiter every foot of their advance, and it was not until late in the afternoon that they saw before them, perhaps a mile away, the rift in the mountains which gave entrance to the oasis.

So far they had come without molestation or observation. Unfortunately the country between their present stopping-place and the gate of the oasis was singularly open and the road from

Jerusalem northward ran through it on the westward side. Although their eyes searched the ground carefully they could discover apparently no cover at all. Far off to the westward the declining sun threw into silhouette marching bodies of troops. They were too far to distinguish individuals, but the sun was reflected from spear point and helm. They could only hope that three men would not be noticed by that army against the gray rock of the mountain wall. There was no help for it, they must go out into the open come what might. It was Dodai who gave the order and led the way.

XVII

THE CONTEST ON THE UPLAND

THE hope that they had escaped observation was instantly doomed to disappointment. Probably the same declining sunlight which was reflected from the arms of the Canaanites also betrayed them as it fell on bossed shield or shining helm or polished spear point. No one but a warrior would be wearing armor there, no one but a messenger would be going south at that time in that place. If the messenger were a friend and had come from the advance guard of the Canaanites, he would not be found in that quarter, and if he were an enemy he could only come from Gibeon. In that event it was necessary to stop him and to do it at once. So reasoned the kings and their officers with their soldiers in that passing army.

Adoni-Zedec, borne on a litter on the flank of the army, to whom the general direction of the company had been yielded by the others, instantly ordered a detachment of fifty men under Prince Arami, his most trusted experienced young captain, to proceed across the plateau toward the hills and kill or capture the newcomers. Then he passed on his way and gave the matter no further thought. It did not seem to him that the

task was difficult or that it might even be impossible. But one thing favored the pursued. They knew about the haven that would be afforded by the oasis of Beth-Aram and the pursuers, who happened to be soldiers from far-off Lachish, did not except of course Arami himself.

Dodai and his two Hivite companions had at first proceeded slowly and warily, hoping to escape the notice of the great army tramping along the road a mile or so away. They watched it closely, however, and they saw at once when the detachment broke away and headed toward them. It was quite evident that they had been observed and were to be intercepted.

The distance of Dodai from the mouth of the pass was something over a mile. The distance of the detachment from the mouth of the pass was something less than a mile. Certainly, it was obvious that three picked men could run faster than fifty indiscriminately chosen, yet among the fifty might be one or two very speedy men and in all probability every one of the fifty would be armed with a bow, and the long arrows, sped by strong-armed bowmen, would overtake and cut down the fastest of men.

Nevertheless, there was nothing to do but try it. They were yet far beyond bowshot range, fortunately. Dodai drew his bow from his back, strung it as he ran, and directed his companions to do the same. Carrying it in his right hand —like the rest of the Benjamites he had been

trained to use his left hand as well as his right for the surprising advantage sometimes given in battle—with arrows ready for instant use, he gave vent to a few encouraging words as the three men continued to run toward the entrance of the pass, which they could identify by the jutting peaks that rose above it.

The detachment had been moving fairly rapidly directly toward them, but so soon as they saw their quarry break into a run, its men quickened their pace also and changed their direction so as to intercept them. The detachment was running straight toward the mouth of the pass on one side of a right-angle triangle and Dodai and his men on the other.

The first compact coherency of the mass of pursuers was soon lost. As they ran they scattered, and instead of an orderly body they soon disintegrated into widely separated individuals. Well in front of his men ran Arami, the captain, who of course divined the haven sought by his quarry, and close after him were a score or more well up in the race. Evidently, thought Dodai, this was a body of scouts, picked for speed. He said nothing further, however, but simply increased his pace until he fairly bounded over the rocky upland. The two young Gibeonites had been especially chosen for their speed, but they found it difficult to keep up with the Hebrew. Indeed, it would have been impossible had he not slightly slackened his pace in order that they might remain together.

The desert-trained muscles of the young Benjamite made him more than a match for the men of the hill country.

Arami, leading the pursuit, could at last see the mouth of the pass and the gateway in the wall across it toward which the messengers headed. He realized instantly that the three would reach it before his men and probably escape him. He well knew the strength of the wall and the force that could be assembled to defend it. He had not with him enough soldiers to take it. If the runners gained the wall they would escape him, for the time being at any rate. With every swift-flying moment, however, the distance between the two parties was being lessened. Therefore without stopping he called off the names of half a dozen men of the fifteen who yet kept pace with him. Those thus designated stopped suddenly, moved rapidly to one side so as to have free range at the pursued, drew their bows, and began to shoot at the runners. The captain and the rest of the men pressed on. It was a game which Dodai and his companions could scarcely play because they were so few. Yet the first flight of arrows came dangerously near the three runners, and they had to do something or be shot down as they fled.

"We will have to stop that," said the Hebrew at last, "perhaps we can check them."

He came to a sudden halt as he spoke, lifted his bow, knocked his arrow, drew it to the head, and taking quick aim sped it into the pursuing troop

with all the force of his arm. His two companions followed his example. Dodai's arrow pierced the throat of the nearest soldier, the only man in advance of the captain. The arrow of Giammu shivered upon the shield quickly and skillfully flung forward for protection by Arami himself, while that of Lalli luckily pierced the left leg of another pursuer. Two men were down from the discharge, but the halt and the delay had been attended by fatal consequences to one of the fugitives. In the very act of releasing his own arrow Lalli had been struck by two arrows. One he had taken fairly on his shield, but the other, by evil chance, had struck him under his uplifted left arm and had gone to his heart. He fell dead instantly.

The fact that Dodai and the others had stopped running made it easy for the Canaanites to fire upon them with good aim. In fact, but that Dodai and the surviving Gibeonite had caught arrows launched at them upon their shields, they would have gone down like Lalli. Quick as a thought, Dodai risked another shot. Another of the pursuers fell before his unerring aim and a second man was wounded in the arm by Giammu, but that game could be played no longer. The pursuers were frightfully near and yelling madly.

Dodai, stooping over, tore the message from the neck of the dead Lalli, called to Giammu and broke into a furious run. He had never before set such a pace in his career. Indeed, he realized,

as did the gallant Gibeonite, that he was running for his life as well as for the message's sake.

The two men fairly flew along the ground. The pursuers, seeing hope of success, redoubled their efforts. And at that moment Arami recognized the Egyptian helmet painted blue which he had marked on his rival's head in the council hall at Gibeon the night before. The sight of his hated rival put more speed in his feet and, thanking his gods, he raced madly on, a wild exultation in his heart. In this recognition he had the advantage of Dodai, who had no idea who it was that headed the pursuit, Arami's armor not being easily distinguished from that of any other captain of rank.

Fortunately the pursuers had now come between their own bowmen and the pursued. The latter were therefore safe from the arrows. If they could make the pass before they came to close quarters they would have won the race, but it was evident to Dodai that they could not make the pass, for now they had the greater distance to go, having lost ground in the shooting. Nevertheless the two ran desperately on, their hearts throbbing, their temples bursting, their breath coming thick and fast, sweat dropping from them. It was all they could do.

They were almost abreast of the entrance now. The Hebrew and his companion could see the men of Beth-Aram lining the wall, arms in hand, but the gate was closed. Why could not those men make a diversion in his behalf? Why was the

gate not opened and an attack launched on the pursuers, now scarcely a dozen in number? If he had been there it would have been his natural order. He cast one longing glance at the haven and then shouted to Giammu.

It was useless to run longer. The enemy was almost in striking distance. They must stop and fight unless they were to be cut down as they ran. He then turned about and, before his pursuers knew what he would be at, he fitted an arrow in his bow and sent it into the thick of them; Giammu did the same, and with like deadly effect. The two had not time to release another arrow before the Canaanites were upon them. Dodai did not have time to draw his sword even. He had his spear in his deadly left hand, and with his shield in front of him in his right he thrust viciously out at the first man who hurled himself at him.

Giammu, with courage no less high than that of his leader, did the same thing. The first man went down before Dodai like a stricken ox, the second man was beaten back by a savage thrust from the Hivite, but the next moment Arami, yelling with savage joy with the rest of the band, closed with the devoted pair. Dodai recognized him at last, and for a moment, forgetting the fearful odds against him, a thrill of joy shot through him at the opportunity. The Canaanites, carrying spears, swords, and axes, pressed about him so closely that they wasted their opportunities in the fighting. The only thing that saved

Dodai and his companion from instant death was that the Canaanites pressed them so closely that they did not give themselves room for a decisive thrust or stroke, and for the same reason Arami himself could do little more than the others.

Thus the unequal contest was maintained for some little time. There could be but one end to it, however; especially as the number of assailants was constantly increasing. Indeed, the end soon came to Giammu, for shortening his sword Arami, striving to clear away for a personal encounter with his rival, drove it into the heart of the brave Gibeonite and Dodai, covered with wounds, was left fighting alone. Arami shouted in vain for his men to draw back and leave the Hebrew to him, but in their excitement they did not hear him and they continued to press Dodai closer than before.

XVIII

ARINNA COMES TO THE RESCUE

SHOUTING and yelling like mad, a number of armed men poured out of the opened gate in the wall and fell upon the backs of the Canaanites. Over the gate, on the top of the wall, stood a woman; in her hand she held a bow, not a great Assyrian war bow like that of her lover, which he had used so effectively against the lion, but one lighter and more suited to a less muscular arm. It was Arinna. Her father had taught her to use the bow.

She had known nothing of the desperate adventure taking place without the walls until the three men came in sight. She had previously ordered Nadab, the steward, and the men of the oasis who were capable of bearing arms to man the walls because she had noted the passing of the Canaanite army and she wanted to be prepared to defend the place against raiding parties upon the flank, if any such masterless men should observe and fall upon it.

When Dodai and his companions appeared in view the whole situation changed. Arinna, who presently recognized her lover and saw his dire peril, acted with promptitude. She bade the men

with her seize their arms, and when they were assembled she ordered the gates flung open and directed them to fall upon the backs of the Canaanites. There were at least a hundred and fifty retainers of Ephron in the oasis capable of bearing arms, and of these several score were already on the wall. Animated by the spirit and courage of their young mistress they made a gallant onset upon the Canaanites. These last had lost heavily, and before the attack of the fresh men they gave way and fled. Not, however, until Arami, at last forcing his way through the mêlée, and chancing to come at the young Hebrew's back, had brought his heavy battle axe crashing down upon the Egyptian helmet painted blue which Dodai wore.

Arinna had seen the blow about to fall. She had refrained from loosing any arrows at first, because she was a woman and could not bear to slay even an enemy and because as the Canaanites turned to flee it had not been necessary, but as she noticed the uplifted war axe about to fall on her lover's head she let fly at the upraised arms of the captain, in whom she at that moment recognized her rejected suitor. The arrow hit Arami in the fleshy part of the left arm, but not soon enough to prevent the stroke. He had no time to repeat the blow. It was not safe to stay longer. Swinging his axe he burst through the ring of the men of Beth-Aram and fled after his own men. He knew he had not killed Dodai, although the honors of this first meeting were decidedly his. He

swore, as he ran smarting from the wound in his arm and the consciousness that it was a woman, Arinna, who had sped the arrow, that he would be back on the morrow with sufficient force to seize the oasis, kill Dodai, and take the woman. He could accomplish that while Gibeon was being invested and still be in time to rejoin the army for the final battle.

The men of Ephron attempted no pursuit. They were not trained warriors, their ardor had spent itself in the fierce combat; besides, the main portion of the detachment was now coming up and there was nothing to gain by further battle in the open. Arinna had descended from the wall and now came flying into the midst of them. White-faced and anxious she bent over Dodai. The old steward raised her up.

"The youth is not dead," he said, "and thou must seek the shelter of the wall instantly."

The counsel seemed good to the maiden. Bidding the men carry in the senseless Dodai and the body of his brave companion, the dead Lalli being too far away to be brought in also, the little party retired precipitately within the wall. The gates were shut and the wall at once manned.

"To thee, O Nadab, I commit the defense," said Arinna.

"I shall hold the wall with my life," answered the steward, "but I think they will scarce attack us now with that petty force."

"They have lost many men."

"Yes, and it will be necessary for them to report their discomfiture to their king," continued the steward shrewdly. "We shall have a respite until the morning and perhaps altogether, therefore thou mayst go in peace and safety for the present. We can hold this wall against all those soldiers yonder."

"But should any danger arise thou wilt tell me?"

"Immediately."

"And see to this dead Gibeonite. I think his face is familiar."

"It is Giammu, grandson of old Shem-Hadad," answered the steward, observing the dead man carefully. "He hath sued thy father for thy hand in times gone by, my lady."

"Yes, I remember. Poor man, see that his body hath the proper care."

"It shall be looked to," said the man, turning away and mounting the wall.

Meanwhile the senseless Dodai had been carried into the house beyond. His armor had been taken from him and his hurts had been examined. He was a mass of bruises and covered with flesh wounds, from which he had lost much blood. He was in a sorry state of weakness, yet the temper of the Egyptian helmet painted blue had stood him in good stead. The blow of the war axe had flattened it, and but for that noted steel cap his head had been crushed and he had been a dead man like the other two. It had served him well,

and another chance at Arami would be given him. Restoratives were applied by old Ilani, and they had already proved efficacious, for as Arinna entered the room he opened his eyes. His first thought expressed itself in his words.

"My comrades?" he whispered.

"Dead, but thou art alive, lord," answered Arinna.

"The message to Joshua?"

"What message?"

He lifted his hand, although the movement caused him exquisite pain, and pointed to the bag. Arinna drew it over his head and took out the little parchment.

"Is this it?" she asked.

"It is."

"What hath chanced?"

"The Canaanites have invested Gibeon, the siege will be pressed home, the city will be sacked. They have appealed to Joshua and my people to come to their aid in accordance with their oath. I must carry the message. There were three of us charged with the duty, and I alone am left." He spoke feebly but firmly and made a desperate but futile effort to get up, but sank back with a groan. "They depend upon me, and I cannot go!" he cried bitterly. "O Jehovah, Thou Great Jehovah, raise me up by Thy power that I may deliver the message, or show me a messenger!"

"I will take the message," said Arinna promptly, as if in answer to the prayer.

"Thou?"

"I."

"Are there then no men in Beth-Aram to relieve thee of that duty?"

"None that I dare trust with a matter of such importance. They are shepherds and herdsmen, not warriors. Every man is needed to defend the walls. We shall be attacked in the morning of a certainty. Arami will come back. He hath a double object here now, thou and I. I know the way, I will go."

"But the gorge is a frightful one and it will soon be night. Wild beasts——"

"That mighty God of thine and mine will sustain me," said Arinna simply. "I am strong and sure-footed, keen-eyed, and quick of hearing. I am armed, my father hath taught me to use the bow."

"To my salvation didst thou loose thine arrow at Arami," said Dodai gratefully, after having heard all about the advance of Arinna's men and the shot that had saved his own life.

"It was naught. Would that it had pierced the heart of Arami ere his axe fell on thee. So, thou seest I must go."

"Thy father may be there. It was his purpose when he left me at Gibeon yesterday."

So much the better. He will assure me a quicker hearing. I alone must take the message."

"I cannot bear it," groaned Dodai, "to be so helpless. If I could have a day's rest, my wounds

bound up, food, drink—but the message must go now. It cannot wait."

"Nor need it. I will take it and Jehovah will protect me."

"Mine own nation shall bless thee," said Dodai. "Thou wilt be stopped at the outskirts of the camp. Say unto them that thou hast a message from Gibeon for Joshua. I know not what disposition he may make, but he will move swiftly and will strike hard. For the rest if we are attacked we will hold this place to the last man. A night's rest will enable me at least to direct the defense. And, Arinna, if thou hast the opportunity when thou tellest thy tale to Joshua, fail not to speak a word of me and if he hath men to spare pray him to send us succor here, not indeed for my sake but for the women and children, the flocks and herds of Ephron, thy father, a worshiper of the true God."

"I shall do all that thou sayest, beloved Dodai. Fear not."

"God be with thee, beloved Arinna. Farewell."

"Ilani and the women will have thee at their tenderest charge. I must go. The Lord watch between thee and me while we are parted one from the other."

She bent over him, kissed him, took the little bag containing the message, slipped it around her own white neck, looked at him a moment, murmured a prayer, and turned and went out of the chamber. Dodai covered his face with his hands.

To lie there in that emergency, sick, bleeding, faint, helpless, while a woman took up his task! It was heart-breaking.

"My punishment is almost more than I can bear," said the poor youth, groaning aloud.

"Thou wilt be much better in the morning, lord," said old Ilani, bending over him. "I will wash thy wounds, anoint them, and bind them up. We have rare medicine for them. Thou shalt have food and drink in moderation. In the morning thou shalt do a man's part in the defense, if need be."

"But why not now?" asked Dodai faintly. "I cannot bear to think of the awful pass, the darkness of the night, a tender woman alone amid all those perils."

"I, too," reassuringly said old Ilani, "worship Jehovah. She goeth on His errand. He will watch over her."

XIX

THE JOURNEY OF ARINNA

THE first part of Arinna's journey was made with comparative ease. The sun, low down in the western horizon when she started, though it presently declined behind them and was soon hidden by the mountains of the range at her back, yet gave sufficient light to enable the fleet-footed, youthful maiden to choose her hard way without too much difficulty. She wore her tunic and vest as usual and the peculiar round-pointed shoes instead of sandals. The tops of these shoes were laced almost to her knees and were a great protection to her as she stumbled and scrambled down the rocky gorge.

Dodai had impressed upon her the necessity for speed. She was quick-witted enough to have taken in the emergency to the full. Therefore, she wasted no time. She often slipped and fell in her impetuosity and her hands and arms and knees were soon scratched and bleeding, but she pressed on indomitably. As it grew darker she fell more frequently and went perforce more slowly, being compelled to pick and choose her way while it was still faintly light. Presently, however, there was no light at all left, save that

cast by the brilliant stars. The moon was not due to rise until an hour before midnight. Now she had to make her way by a sort of instinct, since she could no longer see the trail.

The gorge through which she descended was in deep black shadow. On either side she could see the crests of the walls faintly outlined against the star-strewn sky, but usually she moved in total darkness. How she got down safely and even alive was a mystery. Oftentimes the darkness mercifully hid from her the frightful perils of the way. Sometimes, when a single misstep would have meant a fall of many feet and broken bones and loss of life perhaps, she went on fearlessly, because all unknowingly guided and protected in some mysterious way. Loose pebbles and stones slipped beneath her feet, but not once did her ankle turn. A sprained ankle or a broken leg would have absolutely ended her progress and defeated her purpose.

The loneliness was appalling. Sometimes in all that waste of desert rock she seemed the only thing alive. At intervals noises came to her, especially when from time to time she stopped to listen and recover her breath,—mysterious sounds, whether of earth or air, of good or evil spirits, or savage beast, she could not tell; but they were sufficiently terrifying to make her heart stand still. Again and again her hand sought her short sword, once or twice she even lifted her bow and pointed the arrow out into the darkness, while

such poor prayers to Jehovah as she knew rose to her lips and hung there voiceless but meet for God's hearing. After a while the sound would die away, and stilling the beating of her heart she would resume her progress.

Strange to say, she did not grow weary. A mysterious power sustained her. Surely those uttered petitions somehow reached that God beyond the stars to whom they were sent upward through the still night. Also the thought that she, a weak woman, was doing something great, important, decisive, not so much for Gibeon or for the Hebrews as for her lover, kept her up. She decided that the mad race and the fierce battle which had brought the message to Beth-Aram should lose nothing in the telling to old Joshua. Perhaps she would be the means of giving back to Dodai the place he valued in his tribe, his people. So with many a prayer and many a heart throb, and many a brave effort, she pressed on and on.

After a long time the way opened, the gorge became broader, the going more easy, and at last, dropping rapidly down the last slope, she found herself well into the dark valley. She recognized the spot. There was a spring hard by, she remembered. She was terribly thirsty. Although the proceeding was fraught with danger, she ventured there, scaring away by her approach some of the smaller animals of the night and thankful for the absence of the greater carnivora which sometimes were to be encountered there—like the

lion Dodai shot. She knelt down at the brink of the little pool in the rocks and drank deeply. She bathed her hands and laved her limbs in the refreshing water, and then rising and taking her bearing by the stars, she stumbled over the fields until she found a beaten pathway down which she ran as if her experiences of the night had been as nothing. She covered the miles that intervened between the mountain and the outskirts of the Hebrew camp at a great pace, thanking God that most of her life had been spent in the open and that she was as sound of wind and limb as a young animal.

Approaching the camp, whose limits were outlined by dying fires, she was stopped and the officer of the guard was summoned. She panted out the story that she came with a message from Gibeon for Joshua on a matter of life and death. Examining her by the torches they bore, the men marveled at her youth and beauty and especially at her womanhood. They could scarcely be persuaded to credit her story. The bewildered officer of the outposts finally took her to Salmon, whose turn it was to command the guard of the camp. This was fortunate as it happened, for he recognized her at once.

"Arinna!" he cried, as he came forward into the torchlight, in answer to the sharp hail of the officer.

"Salmon!"

"Hast thou news of Dodai!" asked the Prince

of Judah, who loved the youth, proscribed and banished though he was.

"I left him wounded and ill at my father's house at Beth-Aram and I bring a message to thy great captain."

"Thou!" exclaimed Salmon.

"Even I."

"How camest thou here?"

"Down the mountain."

"Thou didst not descend that fearful gorge alone and at night?"

"These hands can testify," said the woman, turning her torn and bleeding hands and arms to the gaze of the astonished Hebrew.

"And wherefor?"

"My lord Dodai, my husband that shall be——"

"Stands the matter thus?" asked Salmon curiously.

"Thus."

"Speak on."

"He was charged with a message from Gibeon. He was beset by Canaanites. But the story is a long one. They nearly killed him. He could not carry the message, he was wounded and exhausted, and I took it and have it here. I must see thy great captain at once."

"So thou shalt, maiden," heartily answered Salmon, convinced at last. "I myself will accompany thee."

He turned and led the way through the tents covering the sleeping men and women and chil-

dren. Dogs barked here and there, wakeful men or boys came out into the night and stared curiously as they passed on. The fire was yet blazing brightly, although it was a warm August night, in front of Joshua's tent, and around it the young men of his guard kept watch.

"Who cometh here?" asked one of them, stepping forward with presented spear as Salmon and his young companion drew near.

"Salmon, son of Nahshon of the Tribe of Judah, with a message for the Lord Joshua."

"The Prince sleepeth."

"He must be awakened. Here is a matter of great importance."

"I do not like to take the risk," answered the young man.

"On my head be the responsibility," said Salmon, raising his voice. "Indeed, while we talk we waste time, and every moment is precious. We must see——"

"Who doth thus disturb the quiet of the night?" asked a deep voice from within the tent, and without giving time for answer to the question the figure of the great old Hebrew, his cloak wrapped about him, stepped out of the tent into the firelight.

"I have done so, Prince," answered Salmon. "There is a woman here."

"And dost thou disturb me for a woman?"

"A messenger from Gibeon."

"How knowest thou that?"

"I know the woman, lord," said Salmon. "It is Arinna, daughter of Ephron."

"The Hittite who visited us yesterday?"

"Even so."

"Where is she?"

"Here, my lord," answered Arinna, stepping forward. "I have a message for thee."

"Declare it."

"It is written," answered the girl, drawing the bag from her neck and handing it to Joshua.

The latter took it, tore open the bag, commanded a torch to be brought, and slowly and silently perused it. He made no difficulty about reading the cuneiform writing. After he had mastered it he read it aloud. So it ran:

"Ana JAHUSHUA *khazânu sha amelûti* KHABIRI *shulmu u ana bitika u ana Ummânika shulmu adannish kibi umma* ABD-MILKI *arduka sabê sha mât* KINAKHKHI *etekû êli al* GIBUNA *ina kît libbika alik ana resûti sha ummâni la tashami ana iashi ikhallik gabbi umâmmi u gabbi mâti."* *

Which, being interpreted, is as follows:

"To JOSHUA, *chief of the* HEBREWS, *peace! And to thy house and to thine army, peace! Thy servant* ABD-MILKI *speaketh as follows:*

"The soldiers of the land of CANAAN *have advanced against the City of* GIBEON. *In the fidelity*

*I am indebted to Prof. Morris Jastrow for this striking rendering of the original message in cuneiform writing.—C. T. B.

of thine heart come to the aid of my army. If thou dost not hearken unto me the whole army and the whole land is lost.''

Joshua crushed the message in his hand while he thought rapidly.

''How didst thou come here, maiden?'' he asked at last.

''Through the gorge down the mountain yonder.''

''It is impossible!'' cried Joshua.

''I have done it,'' answered Arinna.

''Alone?''

''Alone, lord.''

The old Hebrew drew nearer to her and looked searchingly at her as if to read her face and heart. Satisfied apparently with his scrutiny, he spoke again.

''Thine hands and arms are cut and bleeding, thy limbs also. Wert thou not afraid?''

''The God of our fathers watched over me.''

''True, daughter of Ephron; thou, too, dost worship Jehovah?''

''Yes, lord. Is my father yet here?''

''He returned yesterday afternoon to Gibeon. We renewed the ancient friendship between our houses. He told me something of this threat of the Jebusite. What dost thou know of it?''

''This, lord; Adoni-Zedec of Jerusalem and four others, the king of——''

''I know their names.''

"Have moved out with their armies and have attacked Gibeon. All day long the soldiers have been passing Beth-Aram from Jerusalem to Gibeon. The roads are filled with armed men."

"And Gibeon lieth——"

"Midway between Jerusalem and Ai, my lord."

"And from Gibeon a pass leadeth to the lowlands?"

"A pass called Beth-Horon."

"There are two, an upper and a lower, are there not?"

"Yes, lord."

"Narrow passes and difficult, I am told?"

"Even so," answered the maiden. "They twist and turn like a serpent."

"It is well," said Joshua. "Arouse the camp," he said to his aides. "Bid the princes and the warriors come hither with the councilors. Make haste; we have no time to lose. Let all come fully armed. God hath delivered the Canaanites into our hands. Now, maiden, I will put on my armor, my woman will attend to thee, and when thou art ready I will hear more from thee. How camest thou to be trusted with so important a message? Were there no men in Gibeon or Beth-Aram?"

"My lord," said Arinna hastily, as the old Hebrew turned to his tent, "I am the betrothed of Dodai. Nay, frown not," she continued; "he and two others carried the message. Two of them ran and fought until they were killed. The Prince Dodai, senseless and wounded, was carried by my

people within the walls that protect Beth-Aram. Unable to come himself because of his weakness and faintness and loss of blood and many wounds, I took the message from him. His is the hand that sped it, to him the honor is due. He will be attacked in the morning and asketh succor."

"And he shall receive the credit he meriteth, maiden, and the assistance too. I will hear thee again on this matter. My woman will wash thy wounds and give thee food and drink, and bid them make speed, because when the princes are assembled I shall call upon thee again."

XX

THE ARMY OF THE LORD

JOSHUA was well served, and the women of his household overwhelmed Arinna with attention and compassed her with sweet observances. Her legs had been frightfully torn and cut when she had slipped and fallen. Her hands and arms—in fact, every part of her body not protected by her clothing—were scratched and bleeding and she was sorely bruised, but these hurts were all superficial. They were washed, anointed, and skillfully bandaged. While they were painful and perhaps would be more painful on the morrow, they were greatly relieved by the care which was bestowed upon them. Her torn tunic and other garments were replaced by fresh ones; drink was given her and food to her great refreshment.

She was so excited and aroused, so enthusiastic over the prospect, and so delighted with the kindly words about her lover that Joshua had just uttered, that she made light of her hurts. There would be time enough to-morrow when all was over and the moment of relaxation came, to realize how stiff and sore and bruised she was. That night she had other things to do. Her appointed task was not yet complete.

Indeed, as the warriors and chiefs of the tribes, each in his brilliant armor, came rapidly and took their places about the fire, beneath the torches that were kindled; and as from every side of the great encampment there arose the babble of many voices, the clatter of arms, sharp words of command, and as the whole community about Joshua seemed to break into light and life, the girl was filled with wonder and joy. She thanked Jehovah that her lover belonged to so great a people and that her father and now at last she herself worshiped that God, who must of necessity be a very great God or these people whom He had chosen for His own would not be so numerous, so brave, and so splendid.

It was a different council that assembled around Joshua from that which had debated the alliance with the Gibeonites. These men were younger, their martial bearing and warlike eagerness indicated their soldierly spirit. The old councilors were there, but this time they were in the background. Presently Joshua, now fully armed, came from his tent. There were gathered about him the young men who formed his guard. The great chieftain of the Hebrews was older than any man present, even than Caleb, his famous contemporary, yet he bore himself in his armor with ease and lightness that bespoke an endurance which had not diminished with the passing years in the least degree. Blessed by God, his movements exhibited a strength which a younger man might

have envied; and Caleb was also a man of the same quality. Men a score of years younger than these two were relegated to the Council as having passed the age of warlike activity, but not Joshua and his old friend.

As the great captain stepped out of the tent into the full light of torch and fire, the crowd broke into loud acclaim. Some of the men had been sitting on the ground. They all arose to their feet, lifted their spears, struck them upon their shields, and shook them in the air. The venerable councilors made respectful obeisance to the chosen of the Lord.

"Princes of Israel, chieftains, soldiers," said the deep voice of Joshua—and in the silence that supervened his words were distinctly audible far beyond the circle and well into the camp—"came to me to-night a messenger from Gibeon. The Canaanitish kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon have made a league and covenant devoting us to destruction. As the quickest way to make us feel their power, they have marched against Gibeon to-day, that Gibeon with which we have entered into a fellowship by our oath in this very spot four days since. The councilors of the city appeal to us for help, reminding us of these oaths. Ye know the will of Jehovah toward these people, how we shall go up into the land and possess it. We have offered sacrifice on the slopes of Ebal and Gerizim. We have read the law from the mountains. I have

brought ye back hither and established a camp in a sure place. We may leave our women and children here under guard without fear. To-night we begin that conquest which hath been ordained for us. We march to the relief of Gibeon. Jehovah is with us."

"Thou sayest well," said Eleazar; "we have lingered long enough. Go up, go up, ye children of Israel, take the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, vineyards that ye have not planted, fields that ye have not plowed, wells that ye have not digged, cities that ye have not builded. In the eyes of Jehovah it is well that ye should have them."

"We will go up, we will go up," said one as the High Priest's voice gathered strength and rang over the assemblage.

"Yet beware," he added in thunder tones, "lest ye forget the Lord which brought ye forth out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage."

"As the Lord Jehovah liveth," cried Joshua, "we will not forget!"

"Let us march, let us march!" cried a warrior chief of the Tribe of Ephraim, and the cry was taken up at once on every side.

"Our young men are ready," said another. "See," he pointed back in the darkness, "they assemble in the streets between the tents. Lead us on."

"The war of the Lord begins!" shouted an-

other, and the whole assembly broke into tumultuous and enthusiastic acclaim.

"Wait," said Joshua, "I have something to say to ye. Unless the Lord delivereth the walled towns into our hands or unless we can effect their capture by subtilty, we have no means of entering into the cities. Whenever and wherever we meet the Canaanites in the open, we must utterly and entirely destroy them. If they flee away to their cities they can laugh us to scorn. There must be no escape for them. This army led by the Jebusite king must perish from off the face of the earth."

"Even so," said one of the councilors.

"Thou speakest wisely," said another.

"There are but two roads to the upland, one through the Valley of Achor which leads by the stronghold of Jerusalem. If we should take that we should have to pass by their city, under its very walls. As we advanced against the army to the northward, the people there would fall upon us and we should be caught between the two armies."

"The Lord will protect His own," said Phinehas.

"Yes," continued Joshua, "but we must not tempt Him nor try Him by improvidence and rashness. Remember Ai! He hath given us wit and wisdom and some skill in warfare for a purpose. It is out of the question to make our way through the Valley of Achor."

"The road that leadeth by Michmash," cried another.

"In that case," said Joshua, "we will fall upon the Canaanites and drive them back to their own cities. Even though we should defeat them, nothing would be gained or decided by the battle. Now, I have a better plan."

"What is it?"

"Thou, Caleb, old and faithful friend, with Salmon as thy second, shalt take the thousands of Judah and Benjamin and the other tribes, save Asher, Ephraim, and Manasseh, with thee. Thou shalt march up the familiar road past Michmash and take position upon the hills between Ai and Beeroth. We marked the spot when four months ago we moved to Shechem for the sacrifice. Thou knowest the place?"

"I know it, lord."

"Dispose thy men there overlooking the valley. Expose them freely to observation, send bands down toward Gibeon, let them march carelessly, but be wary. The enemy, thinking that we have come to relieve the town from that direction, will raise the siege, and leaving the men of Gibeon to be held within the walls by a small force, they will march northward to fight with thee. See that thou dost withdraw thy young men and in every way avoid a general battle. If they attack, repulse them, but make no return attack or pursuit until thou hearest from me. Dost understand?"

"I understand and will obey."

"And where wilt thou be, O Joshua?" asked Shemuel, the valiant leader of the Tribe of Simeon.

"Patience," said Joshua, "and thou shalt hear further. The men of the Tribe of Asher will take the post in the Valley of Achor. Prince," he continued, addressing Ahihud, the leader of that tribe, "thou wilt select a spot which thou canst hold against thousands and there dispose thy men. It may be that the Jebusite, thinking to draw us from Gilgal, will send men to attack the camp. They can only come down one of these roads. Caleb and his thousands will prevent that to the northward and thou to the southward. And some of thy people must watch the fords of the river. Dost understand?"

"I understand."

"Thou mayst have no fighting, but the post of honor is thine. The Ark of the Covenant, the priests and the Levites, the women and children, they look to thee for safety."

"While there is a man left to stand before the Lord, no one shall come down the pass," said Ahihud proudly.

"Good, and now for mine own part."

"Dost thou remain in the camp?" asked Phinehas.

"Didst thou ever know me to fail to be foremost in the field?" asked Joshua. "I and the men of the half-tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the

sons of Joseph, will go straight up the mountain side——"

"There is no way."

"Down it to-night came a maiden, and up it Salmon and Dodai——"

"The exile?"

"Nay," said Joshua, "exile no more. I have restored him to his family, and to his tribe, for it is from him that we have the tidings from Gibeon this night."

"Blessed be God and Joshua his servant," said old Ahoah.

"I thank thee, my lord," cried a clear voice from the outskirts of the group.

"Who giveth thanks?" asked Joshua.

"The strange maiden Arinna," answered some of the women, "the daughter of the Hittite Ephron."

"Come hither," cried the great captain, turning in her direction, and presently the slender form of a young woman was seen in the firelight by the side of the towering figure of Joshua. "Thou art weary, maiden, thou hast done wonders for us this night, yet for the sake of Jehovah I must call upon thee for further sacrifice," he said kindly.

"I will lay down my life for Jehovah and my lord."

"Canst thou guide us to the pass down which thou camest?"

"There is no path, but I will show thee the way."

"Well then," explained Joshua, "I and the men of Ephraim and Manasseh will climb the mountain. Our way is shorter but harder. Our progress will be slower. The moon riseth yonder." He pointed to the great disk of light just climbing over the mountain range. "By her light we can make our way upward. Where a woman hath passed the warriors of Israel may go. Unless my plans fail——"

"Which God forbid!" cried Phinehas.

"We shall with our three thousand men make our way upward through that Beth-Aram of thine, maiden, and fall upon the Canaanites besieging Gibeon, defeat them, drive them before us, and advance up the valley to take the kings of the Canaanites in the rear. When thou seest us coming do thou lead out thy men to battle, Caleb. Between the upper and nether millstones they will be crushed to pieces and the survivors will flee."

"And where will they flee?" asked one.

"I shall be between them and their cities," said Joshua. "I shall have cut them off from their kindred and friends. Maiden, tell me again of these passes that lead from Gibeon down the mountains to the lowlands on the side of the setting sun."

"My Lord, that is the way to and from the sea by which caravans and traders come and go, over which the armies pass."

"Called?"

There are two of them, my lord, one above the

other. They are named the passes of Beth-Horon, Upper and Lower."

"Ye hear, men?"

"We hear, lord."

"Broad, noble highways, maiden?" he asked, knowing the contrary and wishing to bring it out before the assemblage.

"Nay, rocky and rough, twisting and turning, and only slowly and with great care to be traversed safely."

"They must flee that way. Do thou have thy young men, strong and fleet in a compact body, Caleb. Let the older men lead the battle, and when I fall upon the rear of the enemy and they break and flee, let the young men pursue them even to the shores of the Great Sea. And, maiden," he added, turning to Arinna, "our advance will relieve Dodai, should attack be made upon thy father's house."

Joshua's plan was one of great brilliance, and its simplicity did not in the least dim its quality. In modern terms, he was to dispatch a heavy force to the north of Gibeon and by feigned attacks he was to draw the besiegers away from the town. This force was to hold the Canaanites in play while he, with three thousand of the best troops, made a forced march, ascended an almost unscalable mountain wall, dispersed the detachment which would undoubtedly be left to contain the Gibeonites, relieved that city, and gathered its forces with his command. By this means, he

would cut the communications of the Canaanites, he would interpose between them and their base of supplies,—between their cities, that is,—and when all was ready he would move up and attack them. The men under Caleb would swoop down from their upland position and join battle in earnest. If the Canaanites stood they would be cut to pieces, and if they fled they could only flee down the terrible passes of Beth-Horon. The Israelites would pursue, and the retreat would become a rout.

It was simplicity itself, but only the mind of a great captain and a born soldier could have thought it out, and it must be remembered that in Joshua's day the experience of one hundred generations of scientific war with its accumulated lessons in strategy and its tactics was not at his disposal. Battles in those days consisted mainly of the push of masses, and were without tactics as campaigns were without strategy. He who could push the hardest and sustain the fight the longest usually won. Later, too, in history that has been known to occur.

It took some time for the plan to penetrate into the minds of most of the simple and untutored warriors of the desert, but by and by they began to appreciate it. Phinehas, the quickest-witted of them all, was the first to comprehend.

"It is marvelously well devised," he said, a great wonder in his voice. "Thou wilt cut them off from their cities if they stand, thou wilt cut

them to pieces if they flee, they will perish before the pursuers in the narrow passes of which the maid hath spoken. Root and branch," he cried, in exultation, "for the glory of Jehovah. I would that I might go with thee."

"Thou shalt go with me," said Joshua, "and thy brother Abishua with Caleb. Thy father, the High Priest, will remain here with the Ark and the Tabernacle. The wit of man deviseth, but it is God that executeth. Bide thou here, Eleazar, and offer sacrifice and prayer in our behalf, thou and thy fellow-priests and Levites, that we may succeed and that it may chance as we have planned to the glory of Jehovah. Now, Princes of the Hebrews, assemble your men, march to spread Jehovah's wonders over the earth which is His footstool from His throne on High. He who hath all in the hollow of His hand. Israelites, let this be thy watchword. Forward!"

Instantly the assembly broke up. Captains, attended by their subordinates, ran to the encampments of the several tribes. Trumpets were blown. Sharp orders of command rang through the night. The moon was now well above the range, the place was flooded with mellow light. Joshua stood while the men of Asher marched out first to the Valley of Achor. Their standard bearer was in the lead, with the tribal device, the woman and the olive tree, on the top of the staff he carried.

"Remember," cried the great captain to Ahi-

hud, "the Ark of the Covenant, the priests and the Levites, the women and the children."

"We shall not forget," answered the leader, and the acclaim was taken up by the men.

The lion-bearing Tribe of Judah and the fierce Benjamites of the left hand with their wolf standard in the lead and the other tribes, save the half-tribes, of Ephraim and Manasseh, were now marshaled by Caleb and Salmon and moved off to the north on the well-traveled road that led past Michmash, Ai, and Beeroth. Back of Joshua the men of Ephraim and Manasseh, the first his own tribe and the second the tribe of his blood brethren, fell in position awaiting his word; Kemuel leading Ephraim, and Hanniel Manasseh, with their bullock or unicorn topped standards to the fore.

"I would that Dodai of Benjamin could have been here," said Joshua, the sight of Arinna standing ready, attended by some of the women of his household, suggesting the absent soldier he loved.

"My lord, he hath done his part. He hath poured out his life's blood in God's cause."

"I know it," answered the great leader. "Now, maiden, canst thou lead us on? Stay!" He spoke to one of the attendants, who presently came forward with one of the asses of the country. Cloths were thrown upon it and by Joshua's order the tired maiden was seated thereon. "We will spare thee as much as we can," said Joshua. "When

thou hast pointed out to us the way, I shall send thee back to the camp."

"I thank thee," said Arinna, grateful for the kindness and in no way loath to ride where before she had walked and run.

She said nothing as to her plans, however.

"Eleazar," continued the great captain, "to thee the camp. Cease not day or night to offer intercession for thy brethren and for me."

"It shall be done," said the High Priest.

Marching out of the camp, amid the crying of the children and the wailing of the women, Joshua and his men advanced rapidly across the valley. They did not run exactly, but their advance was swift. The little dog-trot that they broke into they could have kept up for hours; indeed, the poor ass, accustomed to more easy rate of progress, was hard put to it and had to be pricked on frequently by the spears of the soldiers to keep up with the rest.

In less than an hour the three thousand had arrived at the foot of the gorge. The moon in the eastward sky flooded it with light, but it twisted and turned as it ran upward and parts of it were sunk in deep black shadow. Joshua surveyed it anxiously.

"Art sure that this is the place?"

"I am sure, lord."

"There is no other way?"

"None, lord."

"It is a fearful pass," said the old man.

"Never have I seen the like. There was naught in Rephidim. It mindeth me of Sinai itself." Those around him broke into murmurs. "Silence," he cried, "what mountain shall stop the army of the Lord, what pass is there that Jehovah's soldiers cannot surmount?" He turned to Arinna again, "Canst thou describe the way?"

"Lord, I shall accompany thee and point it out."

"Thou, woman!"

"Even I."

"It is impossible."

"My lord, the rest, the tender treatment I have had, the food and drink have all refreshed me. I have come down the pass, I can go up it. I know the way. I can show thee the easiest paths. Nay, deny me not, my life, my love is yonder at the top of the hills."

"God hath chosen thee, O maiden, for this work!" said Joshua. "It is evident that thou drawest strength from Him, otherwise thou couldst not do this thing. And who am I that I should restrain thee? Lead on."

XXI

THE RACE UP THE MOUNTAIN WALL

THE moon had risen about an hour before midnight. It had taken that hour for the army to traverse the plain, to surmount the foothills, and to arrive at the mouth of the gorge. Some time had been taken up in preparations for the ascent, and it was perhaps close upon one in the morning when the toilsome climb began, Joshua himself going in the lead. By his side, when the trail permitted or immediately in the rear and sometimes in front to show the way, Arinna climbed. By Joshua's instructions two of the mightiest men of Ephraim, steady-eyed, clear-headed, strong-limbed soldiers, were detailed to assist the Hittite maiden.

Arinna's spirit was great and her strength by no means to be disdained, but without the assistance of these two she was fain to confess to herself that she could never have made that terrific climb that night. Many times they fairly lifted her up steep acclivities, they supported her on either side whenever practicable, and toward the latter part of the ascent one or the other of them fairly carried the slight figure of the unutterably weary girl in his arms. She owed every-

thing to them. On the other hand, it was difficult to see how the army could have made the ascent had it not been for her. By her knowledge of the paths and ways, she saved them many a weary climb and many a long detour.

The path, or trail, if such indeed it could be called, was more often than not so narrow that they were forced to go in single file, or at best by twos or threes abreast. Naturally those climbing ahead often displaced loose stones and broken rocks, which rolled down the mountain side gathering force and starting others as they fell, and which had to be avoided by those following after. The three thousand which had approached the mountain wall in a compact body were soon strung out over the long ascent. It was most unfortunate, but it was unavoidable. Joshua had foreseen this. He deplored the necessity that would be imposed upon him of waiting when he got to the top of the mountain range until the rearmost joined him, but there was no help for it. From one viewpoint it was not so much to be regretted, however, for it would give the main force under Caleb and Salmon an abundance of time to make those offensive demonstrations which would draw the main army of Adoni-Zedec to the northward, a movement upon which the success of his plan depended.

Of course, if the king of Jerusalem for any reason refused to be drawn away and continued to press the siege of Gibeon, which was more than

unlikely, Joshua would have to change his plans accordingly. In that improbable event he would send messengers to Caleb to move down the plateau toward the city. Whereafter Adoni-Zedec could scarcely decline the offer of battle and in the heat of it, Joshua and his force waiting in the oasis of Beth-Aram until the opportune moment, would fall upon their flank and rear and thus decide the issue of the contest, although in that case it appeared probable to the thoughtful captain that the victory would be less complete than if the operations were worked out in accordance with his original plan. Ephron the Hittite had described Beth-Aram to him, and Joshua had that topographical quality of mind which can re-create scenes from description.

Naturally in a climb like that undertaken by the Hebrews, the stoutest gradually pressed to the front while those weaker and less able to sustain the awful exertion fell to the rear; but try as they might, and Joshua laughingly gave them free course, none could pass that ancient leader. He seemed to be sustained by some superhuman power and strength.

As it was midsummer, the day broke early and to the discomforts and the hardships of the fearful way an intense thirst was soon added. The Israelites had experienced the heat of the desert and Joshua at least could recall perfectly the high temperatures of the humid Egyptian delta, and they had all suffered in the camp at Gilgal so far

below the sea level in the Jordan valley, but even the leader admitted that he had never experienced anything so dazzling and so hot as the reflection of the sun upon the white limestone rocks, streaked with red which only served to accentuate the reflection and, if anything, made the air seem hotter.

The day was still, there was no breeze. Not a cloud of any sort hung over the valley or on the horizon to the eastward so far as they could see and none was to be looked for at that dry season. Nevertheless, could they but see it, a little cloud not yet bigger than a man's hand was beginning to appear upon that western horizon over the waters of the Great Sea; but it was still hid from them by the great range of desolate and arid rock up which they made their toilsome ascent.

Sometimes they had to climb upon one another's shoulders. Sometimes the leaders had to catch a ledge of rock and draw themselves upward by main force, thereafter reaching down belts and twisted cloaks to assist others. The glare of the sun was blinding, the heat intense, and the dryness was almost unendurable. There was not a spring, not a drop of water of any sort. They had no facilities for carrying water upon their persons, and if they had used leather or skin bottles they would have been torn to pieces in that awful climb.

They climbed sometimes on their hands and knees. Wherever there was a level space the

loose rock broke under their rough sandals and clouds of dust rose which filled nose and mouth and turned the thirst into a torment. They had been armed and equipped brilliantly with the spoils of many campaigns, but they made a sorry appearance as they toiled upward. Sometimes a man would give way under the terrific strain and would fling himself aside and lie panting, his face covered with his hands or shaded with his shield, while his comrades pressed on.

They flung rude words of encouragement to such, but did not stop to succor them, for Joshua, knowing the importance of haste and the necessity of bringing his available force to the top as soon as possible, had bade every man press on, stopping for nothing. Those who fell were directed to come after when their strength returned; and, indeed, most of them, refreshed by their brief rest, would fall into the column again as it pressed upward. Their hands, of course, were cut and bleeding, their legs scratched and bruised. One man, indeed, slipped and fell from a ledge and was crushed to death in a great gulf below. They marked the spot, intending to come later and give him burial, but there was no halt, not even for that.

The sun was some hours high when the panting Hebrew captain, sweat bedewing his brow under his helmet and streaking down his dust-covered face and into his gray beard, reached a level spot of considerable extent which Arinna,

with faltering breath, told him was at the foot of the mountain wall that terminated just above in the oasis of her father's house.

Joshua looked with pity upon the girl. Her face, under its coating of dust, was deathly white, there were dark circles under her eyes. Her lips were pale, her breath came short. She had suffered more than any of them, for between sunset and sunrise she had twice made the journey! The ascent from the valley to the range was thirty-five hundred feet; as the crow flies it was probably eighteen miles from the camp to the crest. Naturally, she was at the very end of her resources, only superhuman excitement could have sustained her. The great motive, love for Dodai, devotion to his cause, alone kept her up. Arriving at the last level place below the last cliff, she sank down on the rock and buried her face in her hands. Her little body rocked to and fro. Dry sobs burst from her parched throat. Her two big guardians bent over her solicitously, but Joshua himself laid his hand protectingly, encouragingly upon her trembling shoulder.

"Maiden," began the great soldier, pausing by her side,—he did not know what he might find on the oasis. He had heard all that had chanced the evening before, and he was soldier enough to believe that the Canaanites would not leave the place until they had captured and plundered it. He had not much confidence in the ability of herdsmen, shepherds, and household servants to

hold the walls, especially if Dodai were unable to direct the defense. Joshua, therefore, resolved not to scale that wall and present himself to possible enemies alone. He would assemble a few hundreds on this open, level spot, which was fortunately large enough to contain them, and then he and the men would go on together.—

"Maiden," he said again, "thou hast done a thing inconceivable. None would have believed unless, like ourselves, they saw. I know not what may have happened at Beth-Aram. I will abide here until enough have assembled to make it prudent to scale the wall. Do thou remain here; we will send for thee and fetch thee when it is safe to come up."

The woman shook her head.

"My lord," she panted out between her parched lips, looking up at him where he towered above her, "thinkest thou that I have come this far to wait? These my good friends," she looked toward her two stalwart guards, "will help me. I must go up with thee. He I love is there. He was sore-wounded and ill. I cannot stay below; I should die. As it is, I begrudge every moment that we wait here."

"I understand," said the great Hebrew. "Have thy way."

"Let us go on, then."

"Nay, be governed by me in this, my child; we must wait until the men have assembled and the rest will do thee good."

While they were speaking a constant line of soldiers had been arriving. The newcomers saluted Joshua and flung themselves down on the hard rock to get what rest they could. They were in pitiable case. No man knew how he had succeeded in scaling the mountain. As he looked back at the long line of toilers, it seemed impossible that it could have been done and done by desert born and bred people in the night and in so short a time.

Old Joshua, standing there, leaning upon his spear, disdaining to lie down, had more to do with it than he dreamed perhaps. The sight of that man, eighty years old, marching with the stoutest of the youths, amazed his men. It was visible evidence that God protected him and sustained him. Every time they flung their glances upward they saw that splendid figure climbing with the agility of a mountain goat, and they took new courage and put themselves anew to their task. After a short wait several hundred men were assembled on the little shelf of the mountain.

XXII

THE LEFT HAND OF DODAI

DODAI realized that the affair which he had just come through by the skin of his teeth, as it were, was not yet completed. Pride, love, hate would all urge Arami to a prompt return with a sufficient force to seize Beth-Aram and its people, to capture him and after torturing him offer him as a human sacrifice to Baal; certainly to kill him if the first design could not be affected; and, most desired of all, to seize Arinna.

Dodai did not believe that the oasis would be subjected to a night attack. It would not be a place easy to take in any event and it would require some time for Arami to rejoin the king at Gibeon, to muster a suitable force and return, especially as Arami, too, had been wounded by Arinna's arrow in the encounter. He counted confidently that he would have an undisturbed night, nevertheless he neglected no precautions.

In the absence of Ephron and Arinna no one at Beth-Aram had the least hesitation in recognizing him as master. Indeed, the relation between him and the daughter of the house had become known, consequently they obeyed his orders without question. Old Nadab, Ephron's right-hand

man, had seen some war service and a few of the older men were veterans, but most of the people, counting boys able to bear arms and older men who could contribute something to the defense amounting to about one hundred and fifty, were shepherds, cattle tenders, gardeners, and house servants. There were perhaps two hundred and fifty women and children and old dependents in addition to these.

The oasis of Beth-Aram lay in a cup in the hills. There was but one narrow way into it from the upland, and that was protected by the wall. An enemy might gain the precipices on either side, but save for the casting of stones which could be easily avoided they could affect little from there. The wall was a fairly good one, although it had been allowed to fall into some neglect which it was too late now to repair. The gates were its most vulnerable part, and while they could probably strengthen them, yet in their dilapidated condition they were a continual source of weakness. These gates were double, which made them less easy to secure and defend.

After Arinna's departure Dodai summoned Nadab to the couch on which he reclined and gave him charge of the wall. He directed him to pile wood smeared with pitch a bowshot beyond the wall, to station there men on whom he could depend to keep a close watch in every direction. If the enemy appeared during the night fires were to be kindled and the outposts were to withdraw to

the wall, which was to be manned by the best men available.

If an immediate attack followed the firelight would disclose the attackers, while the defenders would have the advantage of the shadow. The men on the wall were to be allowed to sleep in relays, but a sufficient number were to be awake and alert all the time. Meanwhile the best carpenters in the oasis were to work at strengthening the gate.

In the north face of the cliff bounding the oasis was a large natural cave which had been hollowed out and extended by successive generations until on one side of the original entrance, which had been turned into a doorway by massive masonry, a large storehouse with many chambers had been excavated around the original recess. On the other side of this door were the rock tombs of many generations of Ephron's ancestors. The women and children were removed to the storehouses.

All the arms and armor in the oasis were brought out and put in service. It was a motley collection and unfortunately insufficient in quantity. There were not enough bows and a painful lack of arrows. They could have used twice as many swords and spears and shields. Even by supplementing the regular weapons with farm tools and staves the defenders were scarcely half-armed. There had been no real war in the land for generations, at least not that had touched

Ephron, and the arms at hand were only sufficient for the repulse of some roving band of thieves, not for a pitched battle.

Dodai gave all his directions without leaving the couch. He was able to get up, but he realized that much, indeed everything, depended upon him, and he must get himself in as good a trim for what the morrow might demand as was possible. Old Ilani's medicaments were wonderfully efficacious and her treatment stimulated and refreshed him greatly. When he had given his orders he partook sparingly of food and drink. Then he had himself anointed with oil and well rubbed by the slaves, after which he resolutely composed himself to sleep. It was no easy task. His head still rang from the smashing blow upon the Egyptian helmet painted blue which the smith of the oasis had hammered back into shape. He had lost much blood. He had been badly battered and bruised and his wounds, though fortunately superficial, still ached. He was still bruised and sore, but he was as tough as a young terebinth and his clean life and healthy body made him think little of these things.

It was Arinna, her desperate errand, her peril, that tended to drive sleep from his eyes. It shows the character of the man that, realizing that he could best serve her and her interest by putting himself in the best possible trim, he actually dispossessed her image and finally did fall asleep.

The night passed uneventfully as he had confidently expected, and he was not disturbed until he awakened of his own accord. He got slowly to his feet and found himself somewhat shaky and sore, but in much better condition than he had anticipated. After a bath and a further rubbing he felt still better. In fact, he felt so well that a wave of shame rushed over him that he had not insisted on going down the mountain himself the night before. Yet he drew some comfort as he reflected that if an attack were to be made upon the oasis it was much better that he should be there and Arinna away.

An inspection which he made presently of the camp at Gilgal from the brow of the hill convinced him that Joshua had moved. He noted the absence of men in armor. Of course the several bodies of soldiers had long since reached their appointed stations and were not visible from the oasis, and the bend of the gorge up which Joshua and his detachment were climbing concealed them from any observer at Beth-Aram until they were almost upon it. As he turned to walk back to the house one sent by Nadab came toward him on the run.

"The enemy are approaching!" he cried. The steward would have thee at the gate."

Dodai stopped at the house only long enough to don his armor. Rejoicing once more in the weight of the Egyptian helmet painted blue which, save that its color had been knocked off,—there had

been no time to repaint it,—looked much as it had before, with bow and shield, spear and sword and dagger of copper he hurried to the wall. Although there was no necessity for it the men stationed at the huge piles of wood smeared with pitch had set fire to them and the smoke blew in the direction of the approaching soldiers. As it happened it checked their advance somewhat and caused them to divide in parties to pass through gaps in the piles, and as it turned out diminished the full force of their first assault.

Dodai, whose eye was experienced, estimated them at perhaps five hundred fully armed and well-equipped veteran soldiers. The odds against him were terrible. He did not see any enginery for battering down a wall, however, and he hoped to make good his defense at least until the arrival of that succor for which he had directed Arinna to ask, and which he felt confident would reach him from the Hebrews some time that day.

The Canaanites came on gallantly. Arami was evidently a good soldier. Bodies of bowmen on either flank sent a cross fire of arrows over the heads of the assailants, who, under that cover, dashed up to the very foot of the wall. These arrows exacted fearful toll from the defenders, ill-armored and unaccustomed to using the shield to protect themselves. The few bowmen on the wall sent shot after shot into the assaulting columns. Dodai himself, finding his strength coming back to him with increased vigor with every

moment, did great execution with that heavy Hivite bow.

The assailants were bewildered by the smoke of the pitch fires and lost coherence in darting through the interspaces and leaping over the lower flames, so that the mass effect of the attack was more or less lost, but some of the bravest managed to reach the gate. They thundered upon it with heavy axes they carried. It shook and quivered beneath their blows. It could not stand such battering long. It would not have stood it at all had it not been reinforced during the night.

But the men of Ephron, exposing themselves with the utmost recklessness, hurled huge stones and rained boiling pitch which had been prepared down upon the Canaanites until they finally gave way and fled, leaving a trail of dead and wounded behind them. They were not beaten by any means, for they stopped and re-formed out of bowshot preparatory to another advance. Now, the wall was thick at the base and the gate had been badly placed. It was flush with the inner side of the wall instead of paralleling the outer face, and perhaps a dozen of the stoutest Canaanites, sheltered by the thickness of the wall from any attack above, were still hammering at the quivering gate.

Dodai, selecting a score of the best-armed and stoutest fighters, descended from the wall and suddenly opened the gates. The men underneath the entrance arch, taken by surprise, were cut

down to a man. When the defenders sought to close the gates again they discovered that they had been so badly battered that they could scarcely sustain another attack, and indeed Arami, who had watched nearly everything that happened and had seen the gates opened, now ordered another assault.

Before Dodai and his chosen had all regained the summit of the wall the Canaanites were upon them. Indeed, the top of the wall was swept with arrows. The Canaanitish bowmen had got the range perfectly. No man could live upon it, and Dodai summoned all to the open place back of the gate. The wall was too high to be surmounted unless the Canaanites had scaling ladders, and it was certain death to expose his men behind the wretched shelter of its broken and ruined parapets. He drew them up in ordered ranks, therefore, and waited.

Climbing over the dead bodies that encumbered the gateway the soldiers flung themselves at it. Such was the force with which they beat upon it that it gave way on the instant. They burst into the inclosure, only to meet leveled spears and upraised axes. Not many could come in at a time. The first rank was cut down to a man, but such was the force of their drive and so great were their numbers that they gradually filled the space. Arrows shot into the air by the bowman outside and heavy stones from the slingers fell upon the rear ranks of the defenders, now en-

gaged in a fierce mêlée in the narrow pass back of the wall.

Dodai, who had forgot apparently that he had ever been wounded, raged back and forth like the young lion that he was,—here, there, and everywhere,—interposing his shield to protect one man, beating down the assailant of another, thrusting his sword into the breast of a third. For a time the wild advance was checked and the enemy were held, but as the defenders of the oasis were forced back more and more men poured through the opening. They were hopelessly overmatched, and Dodai in despair realized they were beaten. His spear head had been cut off by the blow of an axe, his sword had been broken against an opposing shield. His own shield had been cut in two and was useless.

The road narrowed back of the wall and the defenders had been driven to the narrowest part. Dodai suddenly stooped and picked up a huge stone which he could scarcely have moved without the tremendous stimulus of the conflict. Recklessly exposing himself, he lifted it high in the air and hurled it full in the face of the crowd of soldiers. At the same instant Nadab threw his last spear, and those of his men who had any missiles left followed his example. For a few moments the Canaanites gave back and Dodai, calling upon all men to follow him, turned and ran. Those who could do so tore after him. Those who were wounded and could not make their escape

were cut down ruthlessly by the soldiers, who recovered from the slight check almost in an instant.

Dodai and those with him knew the shortest way, among the groves and the buildings, and they gained the little rise in front of the storehouse caves, where the women and children were, some time in advance of their pursuers, most of whom, by Arami's direction, scattered in various ways to plunder the house and other buildings which lay between, while other detachments assembled the sheep and oxen. Dodai was shieldless and weaponless save for his copper dagger, but one of the men gave him a heavy axe and from another who sank down overcome by wounds and loss of blood he snatched a shield.

There were perhaps fifteen men and boys with the young Benjamite, a forlorn hope to hold the storehouse. If they had gone within and closed the door it would have been battered down in a moment. They elected to stand in the opening and die fighting. Arami led a picked detachment of perhaps threescore men against them.

The sun was now some hours high. Dodai cast a glance upward, another glance toward the brink of the oasis that overlooked the valley, breathed a short prayer to Jehovah, gave a quick thought to Arinna, and the enemy was upon him. There was another brief, fierce fight. The defenders gave more than they got, but were gradually picked off one by one. They were driven back-

ward up the slope until finally there was left but Dodai hard pressed against the wall.

Some of his wounds of the night before had opened. He had not come through the present conflict scatheless. He was gashed and cut and torn and bleeding in a dozen places. Only the quality of his armor and that Egyptian helmet painted blue kept death from him a dozen times, but he had not yet been hit in any vital part and while the frenzy of battle was upon him the loss of blood had not yet drained away his nervous vitality. He had earned a certain amount of respect from those fierce implacable warriors by the splendor of his advance, the glory of his fighting, the magnificence of his courage. The defenders had made the assailants pay a heavy toll. They had lost as many as they had killed and more.

There was nothing now to be feared from this solitary Hebrew in battered armor with a lion's skin at his back, blood streaming down his naked arms and legs, while his eyes blazed out of his white face beneath that Egyptian helmet painted blue, and so they paused. For one thing, the place where he stood was difficult to come at. Not more than one man at a time could safely attack him, for he had taken a position between the huge rocks built out from the narrow door which in a measure covered him on either side. Whoever engaged him was apt to be killed. They could, of course, shoot him from a safe distance

with arrows or launch spears against him, in which event he would be as helpless as a trussed fowl; nor was it in accordance with the ideas of the age to give quarter. Wars were wars to kill. Yet they neither advanced upon him nor let fly spear or arrow!

For one reason the loud voice of their commander bade them stay. Arami himself had borne no part in the fray, contenting himself with direction, but now was his opportunity. Forcing himself through the crowd of men he stopped in front of Dodai.

"Thou art that slave called Dodai," he cried. "Thou didst steal my woman and brave me in the Council at Gibeon."

"I am Dodai of the Tribe of Benjamin of the people of Jehovah," was the proud answer.

"Yield thee, thou hast made a good fight. Thy slavery with me shall be lighter than in Egypt."

"Yield to thee, dog!" exclaimed Dodai, throwing back his head and laughing scornfully.

Arami flushed with rage.

"Let none interpose between us," he cried, whipping out his sword and advancing. "He shall be offered to Baal when I have taken him."

"Idolatrous blasphemer," answered Dodai. "Jehovah hath delivered thee into my hands."

It was evidently to be a fair fight between the two, if any battle could be called fair between a wounded, exhausted, almost broken man and one entirely fresh, save for a slight weakness of the

left arm which was trifling, and who had taken no part in the hard fighting.

As the Canaanites in obedience to Arami's orders drew back Dodai fiercely forced the fighting. He leaped down the acclivity and upraising the heavy woodman's axe brought it crashing down upon the shield which Arami had barely time to interpose. The Prince of Jerusalem did not dream that there was so much strength left in the Hebrew, and he reeled and staggered back from the unexpected stroke, which beat down his weakened shield arm and split the heavy shield as he gave way before his furious enemy.

The downward sweep of the great axe and the tremendous force he had put in the blow prevented Dodai from recovering himself as quickly as he had hoped. His foot turned a little under a loose stone and he plunged forward, following his stroke almost on top of the staggering Jebusite. Arami was quick to see his advantage and seize it. He recovered himself sooner than the other. With a movement of his hand he threw the piece of shield that still remained on his arm in the face of the Hebrew, then shortening his sword he drove home a mighty thrust straight at his enemy's heart. Dodai had just time to drop his shield to cover his breast when the sword of the Canaanite cut through it as if it had been a piece of parchment, inflicting a severe wound. The pain, the shock, and the fall had caused Dodai to lose his grip on his axe.

Honors were easy so far. The two men were face to face, almost breast to breast, struggling desperately for the next adventure. Arami strove to withdraw his sword, but it was too deeply bedded in the shield. Dodai flung away that shield and sought to catch Arami in his arms, intending in his mad passion to choke him to death or to crush him against his broad chest, but again the Canaanite was too quick for him.

Amid the shouts and cries of his men and the wails of the women in the storehouse, who from openings in the rock wall could see what was toward, Arami leaped aside. He picked up an axe that had fallen from Dodai's hand and before the other, who was now without any weapons at all and had no shield, could avoid it he struck him again a terrible blow upon the head, crashing in that Egyptian helmet painted blue. Dodai, whiter than death itself, reeled from the stroke. Arami shouted his battle cry and once again lifted the terrible axe. No longer now would that helmet which had gone hurtling down upon the rocks afford protection. The next blow would end it. In his battle rage he forgot his purpose to take the man alive as he heaved up the great weapon, but Dodai was not yet spent.

"For Jehovah," he cried hoarsely, "and Arinna."

As the axe was raised he leaped forward, all his strength in the endeavor. His right hand was outstretched to seize Arami. He got inside the

blow, for it fell on empty air as the two bodies crashed together. Dropping the axe, no weapon for close quarters, Arami caught the Hebrew's right hand with his own. He had no fear in a trial of bodily strength with this spent and bleeding youth. He was not aware of the deadly and fatal facility of the Benjamites with the left hand, for as the two struggled together, Dodai's right hand held inexorably in the air, his left hand seized the copper dagger; and, although Arami's observant men shouted words of warning, the Hebrew drove it through a joint of the Jebusite's armor and buried it to its hilt in his enemy's heart.

Thus Dodai conquered Arami! Thus was Jehovah victorious over Baal!

XXIII

THE LAST DEFENDER

"YE have done well," said Joshua, his voice sounding harsh and strained coming out from his dry throat. "Above us, at the summit of yonder cliff lieth the oasis of Beth-Aram. The enemy may be there in force." His keen eyes swept the cliff. "There be two ways, nay three, by which we may surmount this last barrier, upon the right, upon the left and"—his hand pointed straight upward,—"here. A hardy man may climb the cliff through this rift. Thou, Kemuel, and thou, Hanniel, will lead on either side. When we reach the open the men of Manasseh on the left are to run swiftly across the oasis to the pass that openeth on the plateau. They are to seize the wall that is there. If the enemy are within, they are to keep them from escaping, and if they are without, they are to give no sign of their presence yet. In any event no man is to get away. I want no message of our arrival carried to the Canaanites. Do ye understand, Princes of Ephraim and Manasseh?"

"We understand, lord."

"Forward then, and thou, maiden——"

"I shall follow thee."

Joshua turned to one of the under officers.

"Bide thou here, Sethur," he said, "and as the others come, hasten them to the oasis and when all have appeared follow. There is water there?" he asked of the maiden.

"Plenty," said Arinna.

"And food?"

"That, too, and freely thine."

"There will be a brief rest in the oasis then, and we will break our fast and drink before adventuring further on the march to battle. Now!"

The old man sprang at the cliff with the agility of a chamois and Arinna, summoning all her strength for the last effort, followed him, the two men, into whose charge she had been committed, one before, one after, lifting and pushing the girl up. Instantly, the wall of the cliff on either side was black with crawling soldiers. The last few moments of the climb were the hardest, for they were very weary indeed and the mountain face rose almost sheer. There was, of course, a race between them all, but none passed Joshua. Presently, his hand went over the edge of the cliff at the top, he drew himself up and disappeared. The toilsome ascent was over for him at least. The next second the heads of the leaders of the two columns were visible, and in another moment they stood beside Joshua. After them the man came crowding. Arinna was scarcely an appreciable time behind the leaders.

When she had left it the evening before the

oasis of Beth-Aram had been a place of smiling plenty and restful peace. Now it was a scene of ruin and desolation. The oxen, the cattle, the sheep had been driven away, although not until many of them had been slain by the wanton Canaanitish soldiers who had forced the wall and seized the place. Flames and smoke lowered over the house at the farther end. Growing plants had been uprooted, the gardens were destroyed, the corn had been trampled to the ground, and many dead bodies of the poor defenders lay here and there on the sward.

A low cry of anguish broke from the lips of the woman. It was quite unheeded by the Hebrews in their excitement, for off to the right—that is, to the northward—a large body of Canaanite soldiers were gathered in a confused mob upon the slope, shouting and yelling madly, apparently striving to get at someone who had his back to the mountain wall before the door.

"There are the caves where my fathers are buried, where the stores are kept," whispered poor little Arinna. "Dodai!" she gasped, "he must be there."

"Forward, but in silence," said Joshua in a low voice to the men, whose number was increasing with every second.

Dividing into two parties as they had been commanded, one group ran straight across the oasis toward the gate as Joshua had directed them. It was evident that the Canaanites had overcome

the defenders and had seized the place. They had assembled the cattle and sheep that had not been killed, preparatory to driving them off, while the detachment at the cave entrance completed the destruction of the defenders and the seizure of the women and children the men of the oasis had died to protect.

Without a sound, in order to make the surprise the more complete and the destruction the more certain, Joshua, pointing with his spear, led the other moiety of his force toward the mob on the run. At the sight of the hated and despised enemy the Hebrews forgot their wounds, their bruises, their bleeding hands and arms and legs, their burning thirst, their beating hearts, their awful fatigue; and like hounds unleashed they flung themselves upon the Canaanites. The first notice of their arrival was given by spear thrusts and blows of the sword upon their backs. The astonished Canaanites, already disheartened by the death of their leader, turned to find themselves surrounded by glistening steel. In their amazement, as they stared into the furious faces, dust covered and sweat streaked, of the Hebrews now roaring with battle madness they thought some demons had dropped from the sky or burst from the earth to attack them. Victory was turned to defeat, to disaster, in a moment.

A few made resistance, but the hearts of most of them fell and they broke and sought to flee, their blood turning to water in their veins. The

fierce Hebrews made short work of them. They were cut down to a man, and the thrusts which were delivered them were not gentle or merciful but murderous. Shouts and cries rose as the fugitives met the detachment which had seized the gate and then all was silence. In less time than it takes to tell there was not a living Canaanite in the oasis.

As the Canaanites at the base of the hill were cut down, the Israelites caught sight of a great and gory figure leaning against the wall. At his feet lay an Egyptian helmet painted blue, hammered into a shapeless mass by mighty blows, its silver serpent head shorn from it by some sweeping sword cut. Sweat matted the dark curls upon the man's forehead. Blood from a wound in his head trickled down his face. His iron-covered leather tunic was hacked and gashed, blood gushed from many wounds in his breast and arms and legs. A broken shield, shivered by a terrific blow, lay before him. In his hand he held a battered axe, which he had seized again after his mighty battle, with which he had beaten down enemies as a man beats heads of wheat with a flail. His face where it was not streaked with blood and dust was as white as death. He swayed backward and forward, his head dragging downward. He strove to speak, but in vain. His eyes took in Joshua and the men of Israel, but there was no recognition in them. He was utterly spent. Only by a titanic effort did he keep his

feet; by a sort of instinct, as it were. But for the support of the wall he had fallen.

Foremost among the dead at his feet, by which he was ringed about, lay the body of a great and splendid warrior. Although none knew him there, it was all that was left of Aramı, Prince in Jerusalem, beloved of his king, who had been his mouthpiece in the negotiations, who had loved Arinna, who had sworn to kill Dodai, to possess the maiden who had rejected his suit because she loved the Hebrew. Nay more, whose desires and intentions had been larger, who had hoped to play a great part in driving these Hebrew slaves back into the desert whence they had come, who had purposed to show his little world that Jehovah was as naught before Baal and Ishtar whom he worshiped in the high places of his land. And this was the end of all his high ambitions, to lie dead at the feet of his enemy with the copper dagger of the fierce Benjamite of the left hand buried to its hilt in his proud heart.

Back of Dodai opened the narrow entrance of a cave and from within came the shrill cries of children and the high-pitched, mournful wailing of the bereft and frightened women. In front of the cave mouth on either side of the Benjamite half a dozen men belonging to the household of Ephron the Hittite lay dead. They, too, had fought bravely and well in defense of their women and children and the ashes of their fathers, and had sold their lives dearly. Joshua stared at the

only living figure for a moment, failing at first to recognize the man before him. A woman's scream rent the air, a woman leaped up the slope and fell senseless at the feet of the man whose feet she touched with her outstretched hand.

"Dodai!" she cried, "Dodai!" with her last voice before she lost consciousness.

"It is even so," said Joshua, marveling greatly.

Handing his bloody sword to a soldier the old captain stepped up the slope in time to receive the young man in his arms.

"I have fought a good fight," whispered Dodai with a terrible effort to speak, "for Jehovah and for the people of Arinna."

"Thou hast thy reward!" cried Joshua in a great voice, striving to make certain the fainting man heard and all the world as well. "Hear, O ye men of Israel, Dodai the son of Ahoah is received back into his family, into his tribe, into his nation. His failings are forgot, his sins are forgiven. Before all of you I declare it."

"Long life to Dodai!" cried one old captain.

"We are glad to have thee back," cried another.

The whole multitude broke into acclaim, but Dodai, having fallen senseless, heard no word of his pardon from the lips of the leader. He hung a dead weight in Joshua's arms. The great captain eased him down to the ground and laid him beside the woman who loved him. They had both done well, for it was the last effort of Dodai which had saved the sepulchre of the house of Ephron

from desecration, and he with the other brave men had at least preserved the women from outrage and the children from slavery.

By Joshua's orders the women were called forth, and to them the young couple were committed. There were men skilled in the rude medicine and the surgery of the day among the Hebrews, and Ilani and her women were not without that knowledge. Not all the defenders had been slain, and a number of them so severely wounded as to have seemed dead were eventually brought back to life, health, freedom, and the just reward for their valor and devotion, by loving care and skillful tendance. Fortunately none of Dodai's wounds was mortal. He was fearfully weak, unconscious for a time, and then delirious, but with rest and care and nourishment there was no reason why he should not recover; and the experienced men and the old women said so. Indeed, poor little Arinna was in worse case than her lover, but she, too, would suffer no permanent disability.

By Joshua's orders, a party of the Hebrews put out the fires which fortunately had not had time to burn up more than the outbuildings. The main portion of the house still stood intact. Bidding the wretched women who had lost husbands, fathers, lovers, and sons—all who could be spared from the care of Arinna and Dodai, that is—to bring food, Joshua with his men prepared to break their fast and take a brief rest. The wanton

Canaanites had choked up the spring and pool, but the Hebrews soon cleared it and kneeling down beside it in succession, they drank their fill. With the waste water they washed their faces free of the dust. Fires were soon blazing in the open and the slaughtered sheep and oxen, dismembered and cut up, were soon broiling or roasting on every hand.

It was perhaps an hour and a half later, or it may have been about ten o'clock in the morning, when the whole force was up the mountain. The very weakest stragglers had come last and had enjoyed little opportunity for refreshment. Leaving these men to guard the oasis and gather up the stragglers, and bidding them hold themselves ready for a command from him, Joshua directed the main force to be marched out of the gate into the pass and assembled in the open. Six miles away lay the city of Gibeon. It would be nearly noon before they could reach it going at their best speed over such a country. This would leave them a short time indeed for what they had to do, but when Joshua thought of what his men had already accomplished he had not the heart to reproach them for delay.

Weary still, but in better spirits, they prepared to set out for their hot and dusty tramp for the city. Long before this time, if his calculations were correct, Caleb and Salmon must have drawn the main force away from the town. There was no opportunity for scouting, but Joshua joining them

presently had implicit confidence that his arrangements would be carried out and that he had forecast events accurately. Therefore, without hesitation, he gave the order to advance, himself once more taking the lead.

Before he left he visited the rooms in which Dodai and Arinna lay, in order to satisfy himself as to their condition and prospects. He knelt down with the priest, the fiery Phinehas, who had accompanied his detachment and humbly supplicated Jehovah for the lives of these gallant and devoted young people. And since Dodai had not heard Joshua's reinstatement of him, he straitly charged all in the oasis not to tell him anything as to that, on pain of his dire displeasure. He wished to have the pleasure of notifying the youth himself. Meanwhile he sent word to the camp giving Ahoah and Meriam permission to join their son at Beth-Aram so soon as it was safe to do so.

XXIV

THE COMMAND TO THE SUN

AS no man in that detachment of the Hebrew host had ever set foot upon that section of the upland before, save for the general direction in which Gibeon lay, no one knew the quickest, the easiest, and the most practicable approach to the town. The plateau was very broken, both in a small way and in a large way. The ground was covered with rocky formations and from it rose numerous hills which cut off the view in every direction.

Some little delay was necessary in order to find the best way to march. Joshua wished that some of those in Beth-Aram had survived to direct him, but failing that he halted his men and he himself with his two subordinate captains climbed to the high hill overlooking the oasis, whence the whole extent of country from Jerusalem to Gibeon and far beyond was revealed to him. With his fine topographical instinct he soon selected his way and rapidly descended to his little army, which at once sprang to attention and stood to their arms as he approached.

The soldiers had been measurably refreshed by their brief halt and the meal of which they had

partaken. In their consuming thirst they had drunk in such great quantities they had almost dried up the spring and pool. As Joshua passed down to the front rank, many soldiers with the freedom that prevailed among them greeted him with words evidencing their affection and their admiration. Even the dullest among them had now divined the plan of their great captain; the simplicity, yet brilliance of his strategical conception and his tactical move was apparent. They saw the reason for that forced march, and they were glad that they had made it. They were eager for the real fray, for which this skirmish at Beth-Aram had but whetted their appetites. They lifted their spears and shook them and roared to be led on.

Once more, therefore, smiling with fierce pleasure, Joshua placed himself at the head of his men. The long lines broke into irregular columns and set forth at a smart pace, like the trotting of a dog. Joshua, like other great captains, had a topographical eye and as if by instinct he led them over the plain, across the hills, through the valleys in almost a straight line.

It was burning hot, the heat of late July, midsummer and verging upon midday. True, it was hotter in the Jordan valley than on the high plateau. Generally a breeze blew morning and evening over the upland. But the men had been accustomed to pass the midday hours in the valley in the shelter of the camp. Now, after an all-night

march of the most toilsome and terrible character, they were actually running at eleven o'clock in the morning under the fiercest blaze of the hottest sunlight on earth; for as the time sped away, the indefatigable captain on foot, and dressed like the rest of his men with little to distinguish him save the richness of his armor, increased the pace. The young men marveled to see such spirit and endurance in so old a man, for whoever faltered in that race it was not he.

Sweat dripped from them, legs trembled, bodies reeled, hearts throbbed, breath came short, but with eyes blinded and throats parched again still they pressed on. Shields, spears, swords, bows became almost insupportable burdens. Steel caps pressed upon heads not used to such covering, binding as if in iron circlets temples that throbbed until the blood seemed like to burst from the veins.

The ascent of the mountain had taken more time than had been anticipated. The absolutely unavoidable delay at Beth-Aram had expended precious moments. With an ever-growing anxiety, Joshua pressed on and casting aside the skins which covered their tunics and everything else that could be dispensed with, but clinging to their precious arms the men raced after him. As the morning wore away, Joshua abandoned the practice of seeking easy ways and advanced now, unless it were absolutely impossible, straight across the country to the northwest.

It was about half after eleven they judged from the position of the sun which had almost reached the zenith. Before them rose a high hill. The men glanced longingly at the easy ways that sloped around either flank, perhaps a mile to the right and left, but the indefatigable Joshua went straight at it and they could only tighten their belts and pant after him. Up the ascent they toiled with lagging feet, tongues dropping out of their mouths in their awful thirst, sustained only by the fierce will power of their indomitable leader.

The force had kept well together. There were stragglers, of course,—always there were men who could not keep up with the rest,—but mainly they were closed up and ready. Joshua was again first at the top of the hill. Those toiling after him saw him suddenly stop and throw out his hands. His gesture was unmistakable. They had reached the end of their long march at last. A few whom he permitted to join him on the top of the hill saw before them an exquisite oasis which made the surrounding desolation more pronounced.

Between the hill they stood on and the hill crowned by the walls of the city lay a broad valley. In the bottom of the valley were the remains of what, in the rainy season, must have been a considerable lake. It was now almost dried up. There was just enough water left here and there to show what it was under more favorable circumstances. And the valley was actually

green where the yellow grain had not already ripened. There were trees extending from the border of the lake up the sides of the hill, which was covered with verdure here and there almost to the walls of Gibeon. To the southward, breaking through a precipitous wall of rock below the city, was the famous spring of Gibeon. Its waters flowed into an artificial pool, one hundred and fifty feet long and half again as broad on the side of the hill.

Joshua had heard about the lake and the pool from Ephron and from Arinna, and he had counted upon one or both of them for the refreshment of his soldiers. Alas, the walls of the pool had been broken down and the water had flowed down the rocky slope that fell away from the southwest portion of the town and had been dissipated. The lake, except for the few muddy spots, was dried up. The spring itself appeared to be choked up with something not discernible from where they stood.

Groves around the foot of the hill had been chopped down in places. Smoke and flame from the burning houses on the outside of the city rose heavily in the hot still air. Bands of armed men lay encamped on the slopes of the hill. Other bands tramped to and fro jeering at and threatening the soldiers of the town manning the walls. How many Canaanites there were Joshua could not tell, but they seemed to exceed in number his own force. Perhaps there were twice as many

men left to beleaguer the town as the force Joshua had led to its relief. That, however, did not disturb the old Hebrew. The men he had brought with him were picked men, they had proved their mettle by what they had already accomplished if in no other way. Their blood was up, too, and they were clamorous to be led against the foe. He reasoned that the best of the forces of the five kings would have gone north. He was glad to see that his forecast had been accurate and that the main body of the Jebusite confederation was not present. He cast a long glance to the northward, but because of the intervening hills could see nothing. He never doubted, however, that the battle was raging around the slopes of Ai and Beeroth.

Joshua had allowed only two or three men to join him on the brow of the hill. The others were ordered to halt just below the crest, so as not to be seen. Glad of the chance, the panting soldiers threw themselves down on the hard ground, sheltered their faces from the sun with their shields, and lay striving to recover their breath and strength.

Joshua delayed until they were all up. He then divided his men into two forces. One portion, which he intrusted to the Prince of Manasseh, was to cross the hill and charge straight down upon the Canaanites. The other portion he proposed to lead to the westward sheltered by the hill and with them fall upon the flank of the

Canaanitish detachment at the critical moment. The grim, ruthless old captain admonished each man to strike to kill. Annihilation was the watchword of that fierce day. He wanted no prisoners, nor did he desire that any should escape to warn the enemy, if it were possible to prevent it, although he foresaw that he could not hope to kill everybody and that some would certainly get away.

When all was ready the Hebrew gave the word and the men of Manasseh crossed the top of the hill and for a wonder were not at first observed. The eyes of the Canaanites were all turned toward the town. They had no watchmen looking backward, expecting no enemy from that direction. At a signal from Hanniel the Manassites began their march toward the valley. This captain, who was a soldier trained under Joshua, led his men in open order straight down the hill, every moment drawing nearer to the temporary encampment of the Canaanites. How near he could have come without observation was, of course, a problem, but the incautious shouts of the joy-filled guards of the town at the sight of this timely succor at once awakened the besiegers to their peril.

They turned and saw the long ranks of the enemy so swiftly approaching them. The fierce sunlight blazed on spears, shields, and helmets. They had not expected an enemy from that quarter, they anticipated no attack of that kind.

The troops were not yet all over the hill, and their number partly because of that shrewd open order seemed interminable. There was a moment of panic among the Canaanites, but there were cool heads among them who saw that the force was not a great one. The incipient panic was checked. The men were rallied, bands of troopers pillaging the houses were called to the ranks, and everything was made ready for the fray.

Hanniel's men had advanced without the sound of trumpet, but now the men charged with the duty put their long silver horns to their parched lips and, in spite of their dry throats, musical notes of defiance echoed through the valley. The next instant the Prince of Manasseh shook his spear in the air, leaped forward, and the whole half-tribe broke into a run. In a short time the battle was joined. The first fierce thrust of the charge drove back for a little space the Canaanitish line. The attack was pressed home with tremendous vigor. Spear thrust against spear, shield was uplifted against shield, sword crossed sword. But the pressing impetus of the charge was soon stopped and the greater numbers of the Canaanites began to tell. The Hebrews, fighting desperately, were pushed back slowly by sheer weight of men.

At that moment Joshua and his contingent joined the battle. There was a moment of tremulous panic again, but a second time the trained soldiers who led the Canaanites rallied their men.

Even with this accession of the Ephraimites they still outnumbered the Hebrews and they stood in their tracks fighting sturdily. Joshua was in the fore when the battle was joined, fighting like a common soldier. There was a fierce joy in the old Hebrew warrior's heart with every thrust, every blow upon his shield, and he shouted his war cry as he pressed harder and harder against the Canaanites. They were slowly driven back into a mass of congested men, their line was disordered, it began to break, though many still fought stubbornly on, delaying the inevitable by their courage.

A sudden diversion ended the contest more quickly than otherwise. The Gibeonites under the bold Irkanati, their chief captain, made a timely sortie. They fell upon the unsuspecting enemy at the same time that Joshua called upon his men for a final effort. The battle was over and the contest became a massacre. To do them justice, the Canaanites put up no unavailing pleas for quarter, but they were cut down where they stood. After half an hour of fierce fighting that detachment had ceased to exist. A few, however, had broken away, and these were being pursued not only by arrows but by the fleetest among the Gibeonites. Many of them fell in their desperate effort to escape, but some, fear lending wings to their feet, managed to get away. They fled northward, and they would probably carry the news of Joshua's presence to their kings and the army.

There was no time to be lost. Not a moment could be spared for rest. If the pool had been intact, they might have drunk from it, but it was broken and polluted, hundreds of dead bodies of the citizens having been thrown into it. The spring was choked up and defiled. There was water, reservoirs and cisterns, in the town sufficient for their needs, to be sure, and it was fully at the service of the conquerors, of course, but Joshua could not wait for it. Bidding the Gibeonites secure their city and giving permission to some who desired to follow him, he called together his tired men and marched up the hill that lay to the north of the town, a place of worship, an ancient shrine, the "High Place of Gibeon," and from there surveyed the scene.

The sun was now at the very zenith of its course; it stood in the bisection of the heavens. It was exactly noon. From where Joshua stood a cloud of dust far off on the horizon proclaimed the movements of great bodies of men. The main battle was being fought there. The fugitives, he knew, in an hour would be there. He must be hard upon their heels, and yet— The indomitable old man looked around him at the utterly exhausted ranks of his own soldiers. A good many of them had lost their lives in that fierce contest. Some of the survivors were wounded. All who were left were apparently at the last limit of their endurance. They had done all that brave, devoted men could do. He thought with a fierce pang that

his well-devised plan must fail, that the Canaanites would escape.

Was there nothing left to him? Nothing but God and prayer. Jehovah had never failed them. The cause was His. Would He fail them now? Off on the horizon to the westward over the Great Sea, the clouds hung black and lowering, although it was the dry season. There was no breath of air stirring on the high place of Gibeon, yet the clouds were moving wildly in tumultuous agitation. If they would only rise in the heavens and veil the awful glare of the midday sun fairly burning the men up! As he stared to the westward his eyes swept the horizon, and there a little to the north of due west, above a valley called Aijalon, he saw the faint outline of the three-quarter moon's disk just above the rolling clouds. How soft and cool and sweet her light had been in the long struggle up the mountains! How different from the blaze above their heads now! The sun and moon and stars were God's, the earth itself was held in the hollow of His hand. Twice angels had held converse with Joshua. In days past the glory that had been poured upon Moses upon Sinai he had experienced in some measure. Did some angel speak to the old man then as these thoughts ran like lightning through his fevered brain?

He slowly lifted up and spread abroad his arms, one hand still holding his blood-stained spear, and turned his face upward to the heavens.

"SUN," he cried with a voice of thunder, "BE THOU SILENT UPON GIBEON, AND THOU, MOON, IN THE VALLEY OF AIJALON. IN THE NAME OF THE GREAT JEHOVAH, GOD OF GODS, LORD OF LORDS, KING OF KINGS, I, JOSHUA, HIS SERVANT, SPEAK AND COMMAND THEE."

XXV

THE BATTLE OF BETH-HORON

AS the great words rolled over the crest of the hill, as the men of Israel leaning on their spears heard him, as the meaning penetrated to their consciousness, they lifted their heads in wonder in which awe and even terror mingled. Who was this that shouted imperial orders in the Name of God to the very sun itself? And what did those commands mean? What was involved in them?

The Gibeonites on the hill, who worshiped the sun as Baal and the moon as Ishtar, also heard the double command. They shivered at the blasphemy. Who was this man and who was his God that he could speak thus to the lord of the heavens by day and the queen of the heavens by night? Why was not Joshua struck dead by the angry gods? They looked at him with paling faces, wondering to see him still erect, unharmed.

And what was to be the answer? Would the sun obey? Neither Israelites nor Gibeonites doubted after the first moment. A thrill came into the hearts of the Hebrew soldiers in which the Gibeonites also shared. Was there a human enemy who could withstand them and their cap-

tain when he spake thus to the sun? Would it obey? They listened for a moment without sound or motion. Would it indeed obey, and in what way?

The answer came with astonishing quickness. The air had been deathly still. There was a sudden sigh of wind across the hilltop. The next moment the wind became a breeze, the breeze a storm—how cool and refreshing was its touch! Joshua stood still, a great figure motionless as if carved of stone or bronze, his hands uplifted in prayer.

Down upon the western horizon, driven by the wind, clouds rose. They expanded, they extended in every direction. They raced upward across the sky. Lightning shot athwart the heavens. A terrible peal of thunder reverberated through the lowland and was reflected from the mountain walls. As they stared, the sky above them became overcast. The next moment the clouds veiled the sun, its rays that had blazed upon them with such fierceness were dimmed in the thin edges and soon lost in the solid masses. The sun had obeyed Joshua's command. *It was silent in the bisection of the heavens!*

And then the rain came down upon them, soft, gentle, refreshing. They were upon the edge of the storm. Rain in that season was so rare that it was almost unheard-of. They watched the scene in awe. It was a miracle, an answer to the prayer.

"Great is Jehovah. He is Lord!" burst from

their lips spontaneously, new life throbbing in their veins with every gentle drop of rain upon them.

"Forward," cried the great captain, his heart full of thankfulness and relief, again setting forth upon the run, as if what had passed had been as nothing.

With new hearts and refreshed bodies they followed him. The great storm, as if driven by the mighty hand of God Himself, roaring, flashing, thundering, swept to the northward of them, while the cool, refreshing rain still fell quietly upon them. Behind them the sun shone upon Gibeon. Ahead of them the sky was black with clouds, lightning darted through the lowering masses, thunder rolled and pealed above them. If they had not been running so fast they had been chilled by the sudden coolness in the air. Never was such an advance made under such circumstances and with such speed.

Presently over the crests of the hills they caught sight of a great mass of men sweeping westward in wild confusion—the army of the Canaanites! Camp followers, slaves, servants, captains, generals, princes, kings were inextricably intermingled. The lightning darted among them, the thunder crashed upon them. The direction of the storm changed abruptly and followed the flying, terrified mob in its panic-stricken effort to escape. It was as though they were being driven onward by the wrath of the tempest launched upon them

by some Great Hand. In the rear of them moved the great army of the Hebrews safe from the storm like their comrades, for it had now passed completely over their heads. They had enjoyed its refreshing coolness, its gentle rain. It had blessed them; it was now to curse their wretched enemies.

The fugitives were headed for the opening that gave entrance to the passes of Beth-Horon. Those who had escaped from the fierce battle before Gibeon had carried tidings of the approach of Joshua. They had magnified his numbers. The army of the confederates had been able to make no impression upon the Israelites before them, and they were already discouraged. Old Caleb, the Kenizzite, had handled his troops in a masterly way. He had lured the Canaanites to assault him again and again and had contented himself with repelling them. He had seen opportunities for falling upon them and defeating them, but obedience was the law of his life and he had followed the orders of his captain explicitly. It was well that he had done so, for the very fact he made no counterattack encouraged the Canaanites to persevere.

So strenuous had been their efforts that they had not marked the coming of the storm until it had broken upon them. Coincident with the first flash of lightning and the first peal of thunder had come the messengers of disaster. Caleb had seen the advance of Joshua and he had

deemed it time to move. With tremendous pressure and fierce attack, more irresistible because it had been so long withheld, he fell upon the Canaanites. There was a sudden panic, and although the five kings strove desperately to control it, the task was beyond their power and then the storm broke. They saw Joshua advancing in the sunlight among the hills. It was all over, they turned and fled for their lives in a panic terror which grew with every passing moment.

The storm came lower and lower, nearer and nearer. The lightning struck again and again among the army and men were shocked to death as if by explosive outbreaks of the earth itself. The way to the north, the way to the east, and the way to the south were held by the enemy. They were cut off from their cities, cut off from everything. There was but one way open to them.

"To the passes of Beth-Horon!" cried Adoni-Zedec, who still sought to rally and direct the frightened men.

The cry was taken up and thitherward they all streamed. These were narrow, tortuous, precipituous, dangerous ways. Only an army in order could by any means traverse them in safety and without destruction. And this was an army in such disorder as had never before been witnessed in that battle ground of the world. Into the pass the men rushed frantically in their mad terror. Men fell and were trampled instantly underfoot. Barriers rose, barriers of dead and survivors

trampled over them or leaped them without hesitation. Indeed, the declivities and narrows of the passes were soon filled with dead bodies and the men in the rear tearing along in their panic found the way easier because of that human pavement.

Many of them would have escaped, but all the power of the storm had not yet been evoked, for suddenly the heavens opened as it were and it rained hailstones and coals of fire. The coals of fire, the lightning flashes, the hailstones, big some of them as a man's head, fell upon the fugitives, beating them down. So terrible was the awful discharge of the artillery of heaven, that Joshua and his men, pursuing like mad after the fleeing Canaanites, had to stop at the head of the passes and wait for the fury of the storm to pass.

Such terrific demonstrations are usually short. God had avenged Himself upon these people who had defied Him. The upper and lower passes were choked with dead men. And the storm was at last over. The clouds disappeared with the same suddenness with which they had come. The heavens above them were clear. God had done His part, the rest was to be left for man. As yet none had seen the five kings.

Girding up their loins, therefore, the old captain and his men, with Caleb and his army, streamed down the pass. Gone was their weariness, relieved was their exhaustion, forgot was

their hunger, neglected were their wounds. With a new spirit they raced after the fleeing enemy; faster and faster they sped, each moment giving them new strength, bringing them nearer to their doomed quarry. The Hebrews inflicted frightful punishment on the helpless stragglers as they pressed on.

The guard of the five kings, the best body of men in the Canaanitish army, had closed around them. They numbered, even after the losses of their flight, several thousand picked men. The litters of the kings had been abandoned, no horses could have been used in the passes of Beth-Horon on that day. The hapless monarchs were on foot like all the rest. The retreating Canaanites, reaching the lowlands at last, had passed town after town in the foothills in their mad flight, but in every case the gates had been closed, and no succor had been offered them, in spite of petitions, appeals, and proffered bribes.

There might be a chance to save the kings at the sacrifice of their guard. A turn in the hills hid them from the pursuing enemy for a moment. The important town of Makkedah was hard by, but its gates were shut, its walls manned. There were caves in the hills. Perhaps the best hiding-place would be in one of them. It was the last resort. Committing the remnants of their armies to their captains the five kings, now frantic with terror, sought the nearest of the caves. The royal body guard drew together for a moment,

but their first thought to make a stand to defend the entrance was succeeded by a better idea: they ran on to draw the pursuit from the cave and perhaps by that means to insure the safety of their monarchs.

But the kings had scarcely concealed themselves when the Israelites appeared above the slope of the hills. Someone more active than the rest from the crest of the hill had seen the whole maneuver. Joshua was at once apprised of the hiding-place of the fugitives. Detailing some of the men to roll great stones to the mouth of the cave to seal it and taking a further precaution to leave a watch, the Israelites continued their pursuit after the retreating guard. These last made a brave stand, fighting valiantly, but to no avail. The number of the pursuers constantly grew. The slaughter of the pursued was terrible. A few of them managed to break through and get away, but not many. The rest died.

The sun was now low in the heavens, the day was far spent, the night was at hand. Joshua at last reluctantly ended the pursuit. He marched back to the cave, from the mouth of which the stones were rolled away at his command. The once mighty men made no resistance. Their treatment was ruthless and terrible. The kings were flung down at the feet of the great Hebrew, where they lay helpless, listless, inert, waiting the inevitable, not daring to ask for mercy. One by one by Joshua's command the captains of the host

walked up and put their blood-sandaled feet upon the necks of the dethroned—the last humiliation, more bitter even than death itself.

"Fear not," said Joshua in a great voice to the thousands of panting warriors who surrounded him leaning on bloody swords and spears, as he pointed to the prostrate broken rulers; "be strong and of good courage. For thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

"Great is Jehovah. He is God!" cried the soldiers.

Then the unfortunate kings were raised to their feet only to be instantly cut down where they stood. The bodies were hung to the trees in front of the cave that all the army might see them.

There was yet a little daylight left. The soldiers of Joshua were flushed with victory. Before them lay the Canaanite town of Makkedah. It was defended with walls which bristled with soldiery, who had stared in horror at the scene just enacted. It was a strong place, but the men of Israel clamored to be led against it. Joshua gave the signal. They rushed at the walls, sword in hand. They tore down trees, they made human ladders, they climbed on one another's shoulders. Thus they got to the top of the walls. They cleared them of their defenders, they leaped down into the city, they forced their way through the crowded streets, they opened the gates, they poured through the city, they devoted it to de-

struction. The king of Makkedah received the same treatment which he had watched with terror being meted out to the other five.

And it came to pass at sunset that Joshua commanded the bodies of the kings to be taken down from the trees and thrust into the cave where they had sought hiding, the entrance of which was closed with great stones rolled against it by masses of men, and in front of them a huge mound of stone arose, for every soldier in passing threw a stone upon the heap. There was mourning, bitter mourning thereafter in Jerusalem and in the confederated cities.

Then in that pleasant lowland, amid the vineyards and trees of the Valley of Makkedah, the hosts of Israel made their camp for the night. When they looked back on all that had happened since the night before, the long march all night over the mountains from Gilgal, the advance upon Gibeon, the fierce battle there, their wild run to the northward in the wake of the driving storm, the pursuit down the passes of Beth-Horon to the lowlands to Makkedah, the capture of that city, and the execution of the kings, it seemed to them that they could have by no means accomplished it all in the short space of a single day.

That sun, which Joshua had called upon to be silent, to be hidden, to be veiled, to be still, because its fierce heat blighted the soldiers and made impossible the carrying out of his plans, must have stood at rest in the heavens, said the

poets who hymned the triumph and passed down the traditions of those glorious hours. It surely had hastened not to go down at its usual hour, or they could not have accomplished what they did; so they declared.

XXVI

LOVE AND THE RESTORATION

AFTER that long day of wild, awful battle, Joshua, quick to appreciate his advantage and determined to allow the heathen no rest, prosecuted a brilliantly successful campaign in the lowlands in which city after city and king after king fell to his arms. He swept around to the southward, and after an uninterrupted series of triumphs he ascended to the plateau again and took all the cities of the confederacy except Jerusalem, which, perched on its rocky mountains and well-nigh impregnable, defied his army and the armies of all his successors until long after in David's time.

In due course the victorious army returned to the camp at Gilgal for a well-earned rest after its tremendous labors. Joshua, however, did not lead the army there as had been his custom. Attended by Salmon and Phinehas and Elidad, chief of the Tribe of Benjamin, he left the host at the Michmash road hard by the ruins of Ai and came down the eventful pathway of his victorious sweep northward a few weeks before, retracing his steps past Gibeon to the oasis of Beth-Aram.

Although Jerusalem was still unconquered it

was thoroughly cowed for the present, its king had been slain, its armies scattered, its mighty men laid low. There was no danger to be apprehended from it or the Jebusites then, so Joshua's escort was comparatively speaking a small one chosen from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with Salmon in command. He had sent no messengers before him to announce his arrival. He halted his escort outside the wall and accompanied only by Salmon, Phinehas, and Elidad presented himself at the gate. Some of the herdsmen of Ephron had advised the Hittite chief of the approach of his party, and the sheik of Beth-Aram met them at the gate.

"Is it well with thee, my friend?" began Joshua.

"It is well," answered Ephron.

"And that young Benjamite, Dodai, left here sore wounded?"

"It is well with him also, lord. He is still weak, but he hath regained his consciousness long since and under the care of my people is well on the way to recovery."

"I doubt not that brave and lovely daughter of thine hath contributed much toward the curing of his ailments."

"Thou speakest true. There is but one thing needed to his complete restoration to health and happiness."

"And that is?"

"Thy forgiveness, mighty lord, and reinstatement in his people once again."

"Thou hast not told him?"

"According to thine order which was told me on my return after the bloody day at Beth-Horon."

"Where I have heard from Caleb, mine old friend, that thou didst bear thyself bravely."

"It was good for me to strike a blow in Jehovah's cause," answered Ephron simply.

"It is well," said Joshua. "I think thou knowest these, my companions. Thou wilt conduct us to the youth and the maiden."

"Thou wilt find them together," said Ephron, smiling, as he pointed them to the way.

"As I trust they may ever be," said Joshua meaningly, stepping forward.

Once again under the mighty terebinth, which had been the scene of their first meeting and their second, where Dodai had slain the lion and not far from the point where he had held the last fortress against Arami, they found the two lovers.

Dodai's look at death had been a very near one. The mighty blow of the axe upon his head which had all but beaten him down, the fierce thrust at his heart which it had barely missed, by the sword of Arami, had almost put a final end to his dreams and his visions. If he had erred grievously he had atoned nobly, and it seemed as if Jehovah on that account had granted him another chance.

In answer to Arinna's frantic petitions to God and to Dodai himself as she knelt for long hours by the bedside of her unconscious, delirious hero he had finally opened his eyes and recognized her.

God had prospered old Ilani's efforts for his cure, and when Ephron returned the day after the battle at Beth-Horon, in which he had borne a splendid part by Caleb's side, his own medical skill, which was not little, had contributed much to the recovery. But Dodai always said it was Arinna's love and Arinna's prayers that had wrought the almost miracle of his resurrection.

They would not allow him to talk much at first. Indeed, he was quite content to lie and just look at Arinna. She, too, had gone through trouble and toil and anguish, mental and physical. She, too, had been laid low, but her recovery had been more rapid than his. She had been conscious all the time, and thinking little of herself and much of Dodai had helped her to regain her strength. Now she hovered over him like a ministering angel.

From the few survivors among the men and from the women and children, not one of whom had been hurt, she learned the whole story of the desperate battle against overwhelming odds on the wall, how they had held the gate, how Dodai had kept the door and in that last terrific hand to hand, breast to breast encounter had slain his rival, the man who had threatened her with degradation and insult because she had preferred the brave Hebrew to the idolatrous Jebusite.

It was not alone the face of Arinna that Dodai gazed into with returning consciousness, for in his bedchamber assisting in his care he found his

mother, Meriam, while on the other side of his couch old Ahoah, his father, bowed over him and thanked Jehovah for this beginning of his son's recovery. So soon as it had been safe they had been summoned from the camp at Gilgal at Joshua's order. Dodai's chief concern, now that the safety of Arinna was assured and he had heard the story from Ahoah and Meriam, who were both glad to bear their testimony to the maiden's tremendous feat in carrying the message to Joshua, was as to his own future status. As to that all those about him were strangely silent. Neither from Ephron nor from his father nor from his mother nor from the woman he loved could he get any satisfactory answer. They could not even tell him that by Joshua's orders they were silent. They just met his request with an unbroken refusal to discuss the matter. Yet when he asked the question old Ephron looked wise, his father smiled, his mother kissed him, and Arinna laughed gaily. There was some comfort to the young man's heart in all of these various manifestations of emotion. He knew Joshua was a stern, inflexible, even terrible ruler. But he also knew him as justice incarnate, so hope played its part in bringing him to his feet again.

Tacitly his approaching union with Arinna was admitted, but neither Ephron nor Ahoah was willing to discuss it with him. It was apparently a tabooed subject. As they said to him when he broached it he had nothing to do now but to get

well. It was not a tabooed subject between the two lovers, however, and they discussed it in all its lights and bearings—longing, planning, dreaming.

Ordinarily the men of that day recovered quickly from wounds, but Dodai had lost so much blood in two days of fighting, he had drawn so much upon his nervous vitality in the second day in performing feats which would have taxed to the very limit the nerves and strength of an entirely fresh man, that his recovery was accordingly slow. It was some weeks after he had been stricken down before he was able to go out on the paved terrace in front of the house where he could recline on cushions and robes in the morning or evening sunlight. And still more time elapsed before with unsteady steps he could walk to that place he loved above all others in the oasis, under the terebinth which was so associated with his fortunes.

They had all helped him heretofore, but on this great day they left his tendance to Arinna alone. Ephron and Ahoah, now congenial friends, watched the two from the doorway as they made their way toward the shelter of the great oak. Dodai's arm was on Arinna's shoulder. He bore heavily upon that slender maiden. He still needed her support, and she was glad to feel the pressure of his weight. The two old men smiled. Meriam, who stood by the other side with old Ilani, stared after them with tears in her eyes in accordance

with the way of women and mothers. The men might gain by the alliance, but she stood only to lose.

There were still many evidences of the terrible battle which had raged through the oasis, and there would be for many a long day, but Ephron had bought other slaves and employed other people and much had been done to repair the ravages of war. Under the terebinth and thereabouts all was as it had been before. Slaves had preceded them by Arinna's forethought and had spread robes and cushions on the thick grass for the comfort of the convalescent. Dodai sank down upon this improvised couch, half reclining against the bank, and his dearly beloved Arinna knelt by his side.

From where he lay he could not see the camp at Gilgal, but the tops of the far-off mountains of Moab rose across the valley above the edge of the oasis. His eyes strayed that way.

"Jehovah hath been good to me," began the Hebrew. "Thou art safe and well, beloved Arinna. Thy home hath been preserved, and although many men are gone others have taken their places and all the women and children are well."

"There is much in that for which to be thankful," murmured the girl.

"But that would not fill my cup to overflowing," continued Dodai, sitting up and stretching out his hand to her.

"And what more?" asked Arinna, who very well knew but would fain hear.

"Thou hast given me thine heart."

"And doth not that content thee?"

"It is more than my deserts. I know not how I have been so blessed. Yet I can never be completely happy while I am an exile and an outcast from my people."

"Not even with me? In my arms?" asked the maiden softly.

"Thou hast given me much more than I ever hoped to possess in giving me thyself, yet half the joy I take in thee will be lost if I cannot present thee as my wife to my people and my tribe."

This was a very adroit answer indeed, and it almost satisfied Arinna. She moved nearer to him and took that outstretched hand and pressed it against her heart.

"Women are not like men," said the girl resignedly, but with a little regret in her voice nevertheless. "With thee alone I am content."

"And thy father, the noble Ephron?" questioned Dodai, smiling shrewdly.

"Oh!" exclaimed Arinna, a little puzzled. "I want him as well, of course, but——"

In default of an argument she raised his hand to her lips.

"Nay, waste not thy kisses upon my hand," he whispered tenderly.

He was quite strong enough to draw her to his breast and kiss her as he had done many times

since he recovered consciousness, each time with a new thrill and a greater joy.

"It is so easy to love thee," he said, releasing her a little. "All that thou hast done hath tended to increase thy glory and reputation with all men. I can imagine how the tale of that bold journey of thine down the cliff at night will be told from generation to generation."

"It was for thee."

"But I—" he shook his head—"I sinned grievously. I know not whether the little I was permitted to do before I was stricken down hath atoned or whether more will be exacted of me."

"And dost thou not think that the story of thy fight for Israel, and for me, will be told as well as the little I have done?"

"Perhaps, but if more be required of me I stand ready. With thy love I could do anything. See." He had released her and got slowly to his feet. "The strength cometh back to my veins. In a few days I shall be able to do a man's part again. There will be more fighting. I shall be ready and, if God pleaseth, the mighty Joshua, whom I love next to thee and those who gave me birth, may give me opportunity to win back his favor."

"That will be, I am sure," answered the maiden.

"Let us now go yonder to the wall that overlooketh the valley," said Dodai.

"Art strong enough?"

"Thou shalt see. I would fain gaze again upon the tents of my people."

There was perhaps no need for Arinna to offer her shoulder as a crutch, but she was glad to do it and Dodai was glad to avail himself of it. Thus the two started toward the edge. Their backs were to the house. They did not see the little group coming across the grass, and Joshua signed to those with him that they should be silent. The two lovers paused by the wall. Dodai leaned upon it and stared down. As he looked the great encampment broke into sudden life. From out the black goat's-hair tents the women and children poured. The priests assembled. The Levites came forth. Many of them bore instruments of music. They broke into frantic motion as down the road the advance guard of the army returning victorious came into view. The sunlight sparkled on helm and spear point. Dodai's hands left the wall. He stood up straight, his head thrown back, his eyes flashing, his heart throbbing, drinking it in.

"They have come back," he said. "Would God that I were there."

Poor little Arinna felt rather small and lonely. She nestled close to him.

"Thou art with me," she whispered.

"Yes," said the young Hebrew, looking down upon her and drawing her to his heart. "Would we were both there."

"Thou shalt be," said a deep and well-remembered voice behind him.

Not releasing the girl, he turned. There stood

great and mighty Joshua in all his splendor of personality, yet his bent and battered armor and his stained and faded garments bore evidences of hard campaigning and fierce hand-to-hand fighting. And back of Joshua the noble Ephron, his gentle father Ahoah, Salmon his beloved comrade in arms, fierce Phinehas the high priest that was to be, Elidad his tribal captain, and Meriam his mother with old Ilani looked kindly upon him.

"My lord," exclaimed Dodai, releasing Arinna. He saluted, bowed low, and then drew himself up. "I have sinned and played the fool exceeding," he said straightforwardly.

"Thou hast indeed, but thou hast atoned. I cannot speak for Jehovah, but so far as I and the people are concerned thou hast put away thy sins. Thy punishment is remitted."

"Dost thou mean——"

"My sentence is revoked. Thou art restored to thy tribe and people," answered Joshua, "Eleazar, the High Priest of Jehovah, consenting."

Dodai, forgetful of his weakness, sprang forward in glad thankfulness inexpressible and unutterable. He seized the hand of Joshua and bent over it, but that great man gathered him to his breast and pressed a kiss upon the youthful Benjamite's forehead.

"My son, my son," he said with rare tenderness, "I had rather receive thee back than take ten cities."

"And thou, Phinehas," cried Dodai, "who shalt some day stand in thy father's place as Chief of the Priests of our God?"

"Jehovah hath not spoken to me," said Phinehas, extending his hand, "but the whole army rings with the story of thy great fighting here and of the message that thou and yonder maiden didst bring. I dare not yet speak for our God, but when we inquire of you by Urîm and by Thummin, the lots will declare in thy favor, I am persuaded."

"And I," added Elidad.

"And I, and I," said Ahoah and Meriam.

"Thou knowest how I feel," said Salmon. "And Rahab hath never ceased to blame herself. There will be joy in her heart."

Old Ephron said nothing. He detached himself from the little group and walked to Arinna, who had stood somewhat forlornly apart although her heart thrilled at the praise heaped upon her lover and she had rejoiced with him at the promise of restoration.

"There is another here," said Joshua, following Ephron's movement, "who meriteth much from Israel. As our fathers did four hundred years ago so we have entered into blood brotherhood with Ephron the Hittite of the Tribe of Zohar, and the elders of Israel consenting we shall cement that brotherhood, Ephron also consenting and thou, too, Dodai, by a marriage between thee and that Arinna yonder. Maiden,"

said Joshua, turning to the young girl, "Israel oweth thee much. What can we give thee to show our gratitude? There is rich spoil in the camp. Thou shalt choose what thou wilt."

"My lord," said Arinna, looking at Dodai, "thou hast this moment given me all I could ask. I wish for nothing else."

Dodai turned on the instant. He stepped close to her and put his arm about her.

"Thou art willing?" said Joshua to Ephron.

"Glad."

"And thou, Ahoah?"

"Glad, too."

"May the blessing of Jehovah be upon ye," said Joshua, lifting his hands.

"Amen," said fierce Phinehas the priest, lending whatsoever sanction his sacerdotal character could convey.

Some days after, Dodai, now fully recovered from his wounds, was formally restored to all his tribal, national, and religious privileges in the very place in the camp at Gilgal where he had lost them. Eleazar had satisfied them all that the restoration was in accordance with the will of Jehovah. Immediately thereafter Dodai and Arinna were wedded with the hearty approval of all.

His marriage did not prevent the young prince from participating in the subsequent campaigns and greatly distinguishing himself in the tremendous and decisive battle fought against the

northern Canaanitish confederation under Jabin, king of Hazor, by the waters of Merom.

In the final division of territory the Tribe of Benjamin received that section of the country in which Gibeon lay, and Dodai was appointed governor of that city by old Elidad, the chief of the tribe. The Gibeonites, rightly or wrongly, regarded him as their savior, and although they often murmured under the hard yoke which they bore as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Israelites, their murmurs were not directed against the young Prince of Benjamin, to whom they were persistently grateful.

Dodai sometimes resided in the city, but he loved better to repair with his beautiful young wife to the delightful oasis of Beth-Aram, where he had both won his love and restored his honor. And as we found him there at the beginning of the story, there with Ephron and with the little children which speedily grew up around him, we may leave him.

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